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A Dark Trace

*Sigmund Freud on the
Sense of Guilt*

HERMAN WESTERINK

LEUVEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

A DARK TRACE
SIGMUND FREUD ON THE SENSE OF GUILT

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Introduction

“Psychoanalysis has never claimed to provide a complete theory of human mentality in general.”¹ Freud wrote these words in 1914, shortly after his break with Jung. It is indeed true that he never concerned himself with developing an all-embracing system, but rather moved from the analysis of patients to areas of special attention: repression, dreams, the unconscious, sexuality and resistance. Sense of guilt also constituted an area of interest in his work. In his search for an explanation for and the origins of sense of guilt it appears that he did not attempt to construct a definitive theory here either. Despite returning repeatedly to this topic, Freud never wrote a systematic article about this feeling.² When touching upon sense of guilt, which he did often, he mapped it and indicated its connections to other psychic phenomena and with culture. His point of departure was the individual, and this is striking, not so much against the background of his interests and patient analyses, but because of the dominant tendencies in psychology and philosophy, inasmuch as these dealt with theorizing about man and mind. In the nineteenth century, science (and hence psychology, inasmuch as one may call it a science) tended towards system development which explained “everything”. *Psyche*, 1846, by Carl Gustav Carus, *Philosophie des Unbewußten* [Philosophy of the Unconscious], 1869, by Eduard von Hartmann, and also Wilhelm Wundt’s *Völkerpsychologie* [Folk-Psychology], 1905-1920, are good examples of this. Accordingly Hartmann wrote in the introduction to his book that he saw it as his task to realize a synthesis of the great philosophical systems into a monistic unity.³ This romantic tradition of great systems built around an unambiguous principle did not fail to have its effect on psychoanalysis. Jung, Adler and later Rank, too, are in essence psychoanalysts who express this tradition of system construction and monism. Freud repeatedly distanced himself from these tendencies, not only because there is always an individual case to disprove any system, but also because he believed humans are fundamentally in conflict, because every analytic insight achieved appears also to cloak something else, and because the therapist is never in a position objectively to plumb the deepest emotional depths. Nevertheless, he is in a certain way very much in the tradition of the great theorists. Whether one considers Darwin’s *The Descent of Man*, Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* or Breasted’s *The Dawn of Conscience*, these are all comprehensive works which resonate in Freud’s work. Put another way, although he was certainly interested in “everything”, he did not explain it all by reducing it to a single principle. It

¹ S. Freud, *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*, SE XIV, p.50.

² “Sigmund Freud never actually wrote a book dedicated entirely to guilt, but the various comments he made on the subject throughout his work make him the true initiator of the study of the sense of guilt and certainly the first person to approach the question systematically.” R. Speciale-Bagliacca, *Guilt. Revenge, Remorse and Responsibility after Freud*, Brunner-Routledge, Hove/New York, 2004, p.1.

³ E. von Hartmann, *Philosophie des Unbewußten. Versuch einer Weltanschauung*, Carl Duncker’s Verlag, Berlin, 1869, pp.1-4.

would be better to say that he placed the unique individual before a background of changing and varied cultures and religions.

Freud does not describe systems but areas of attention. With the exception of *The Interpretation of Dreams* there is not one book which exhaustively explores a single phenomenon. This is why Freud preferred to speak about “fundaments”, “types”, “speculations”, “fantastic hypotheses” and “nuclear complexes” and used words like “fragment”, “project”, “outline”, “formulations”, “observations”, “notes” or “further remarks” in the titles of some of his works. He preferred to direct his attention to the victims (neurotics) of modern culture, to the decisive (small) events which changed history and the great men who were able to influence history.

My study on sense of guilt in Freud’s work is not intended to construct or reconstruct a conclusive theory. I am concerned in the first place with describing sense of guilt as an area of attention. My thesis is that sense of guilt is not a secondary theme which appears primarily in Freud’s later work but that in fact it plays a fundamental role in his earlier psychoanalytic work.⁴ It is via the analysis of sense of guilt that he came to understand the importance of repressed wishes and desires. It is via the analysis of sense of guilt that he discovered the Oedipus complex and the meaning of the ambivalence of love and hate. It appears to be an affect omnipresent in the tension between passions, desires and repressed feelings on the one hand and a censuring, accusatory morality on the other. Freud was not only able to research the nature and meaning of that repression via sense of guilt, but was also able to inquire after the origin of morality in both its individual and cultural guises.

In this study I map the attention Freud paid to sense of guilt and sketch the development of his thought on this issue and the meaning it has for other central topics in his oeuvre. This is not an exhaustive technical analysis, nor is it a clinical debate with Freud. Instead I shall emphasize Freud’s debates. We shall see that the great debates he had with students (Jung, Rank, Klein) were debates in which sense of guilt played a prominent role. His thinking about sense of guilt can largely be described by means of these debates. I shall also emphasize the important influences on Freud’s thinking and his use of others’ writings. These choices clearly demonstrate the importance of our field of inquiry. It is precisely this approach – Freud in debate – which enables us to perceive his thoughts on sense of guilt more clearly than we would were we to limit ourselves to his oeuvre alone. I believe this approach provides clarification of or corrections to many contributions to Freud studies which limit themselves to technical analyses of his work.

⁴ In much literature on Freud sense of guilt is only treated in the context of the Oedipus complex which only became a central topic in Freud’s writings from *Totem and Taboo* onwards, and especially in the 1920s and 1930s. An example of can be found in Grinberg’s study on guilt and depression, one of the few studies that explicitly concerns sense of guilt in Freudian (and Kleinian) thought. His study starts off with an exegesis of *Totem and Taboo*; earlier writings on sense of guilt are hardly elaborated upon. L. Grinberg, *Guilt and Depression*, Karnac Books, New York/London, 1992.

Why write a book on Freud's thoughts on sense of guilt? The most obvious reason is this: there is no recent study of sense of guilt in Freud's work. In the past it has been mainly theologians who have addressed this issue in his work, but this never really led to a comprehensive, descriptive study. The psychoanalytic literature also lacks a study of this kind. It is thus high time that this subject was examined in detail.

The second reason has to do with my own research to date. In my dissertation on the formation of conscience in early seventeenth-century orthodox Calvinism guilt was a prominent topic. It was clear that Puritanism time and time again emphasized people's sin or guilt. Sinfulness as guilt was something to be understood in order to consequently be avoided by focusing on redemption and salvation. In this way guilt not only has a fundamental, but also an enigmatic character. The determination of sin and guilt was thus different than in the Roman Catholic tradition where sins and feelings of guilt were differentiated much more clearly into many (major and minor) violations, and ideas were consequently judged and handled in a different way. A study of the various forms of guilt and how they are handled became more and more urgent.

There is another good reason to take sense of guilt as a subject for investigation. As we shall see, Freud conducted various debates during his life in which sense of guilt played a role. The debate with the London School (Klein and others) at the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s is of particular interest here. That debate is, after all, also the beginning of what is now known as the Anglo-Saxon tradition. One might say that the French psychoanalytic school, following Jacques Lacan, built upon Freud's position in that debate. Recent years have seen the French tradition gain ground in the Anglo-Saxon intellectual world. This has naturally led to discussions *and* misunderstandings. It is thus good to focus once again on the debate between Freud and the London School, not to demonstrate Freud's points (right or wrong), but principally in order to show where the agreements and differences in perception lie and the background against which they arose.

This book is entitled *A Dark Trace. Sigmund Freud on the Sense of Guilt*. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud cites *Oedipus Rex* when he writes that the tragedy tells the story of Oedipus' quest for the cause of Thebe's suffering: he follows *die dunkle Spur der alten Schuld*, he reads the dark trace of an ancient guilt, in order to eventually discover that the search leads to his own acts (and desires). Freud occasionally spoke thereafter about the search for the origins of sense of guilt as tracking a "dark trace". I am following that trace, which begins with Freud's intuition of an oppressive morality at loggerheads with the passions, a tension which manifests itself in self-reproach. Cutting across self-analyses, case histories and cultural studies, the dark trace ends in the history of the Jewish religion.

Fundamental to this work are Freud's texts, as they appeared in the *Standard Edition*. The use of the *Standard Edition* instead of the original German texts (*Gesammelte Werke*) causes some technical problems. Most importantly, the

distinction between *Schuldbewußtsein* and *Schuldgefühl* is erased as both words are translated with “sense of guilt”. Only occasionally, James Strachey translates these words explicitly as “consciousness of guilt” and “feeling of guilt”. His reason for translating both *Schuldbewußtsein* and *Schuldgefühl* as “sense of guilt” is that “they are synonyms apart from their literal meaning”.⁵ Although our study will show that *Schuldbewußtsein* and *Schuldgefühl* are to be related with specific theoretical developments and reformulations Strachey’s choice can be defended. There is indeed no clear theoretical distinction between *Schuldbewußtsein* and *Schuldgefühl*. Hence, because of the necessary references to the *Standard Edition* I will refer to both terms as “sense of guilt”. When required I will indicate whether we are dealing with “consciousness of guilt” or “feeling of guilt”. Other technical problems will be addressed in footnotes.

This book is the revised English version of a study originally written in Dutch.⁶ I would like to express my gratitude to those who contributed significantly to the original manuscript and the final English text. I thank Patrick Vandermeersch and my former colleagues and friends in Groningen for their kind support and inspiring suggestions, and Susanne Heine and my colleagues and friends in Vienna for their critical reviews which enabled me to improve the manuscript. I thank Philippe van Haute for his generous support and advice. I am grateful to Julia Harvey, Lis Thomas and Karin Krikkink for their help.

⁵ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, SE XXI, p.135.

⁶ H. Westerink, *Het schuldgevoel bij Freud. Een duister spoor*, Uitgeverij Boom, Amsterdam, 2005.

Chapter 1

Carmen and other representations

1.1 Introduction

The first time sense of guilt is explicitly mentioned in Freud's work is during a short discussion of a case in *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*.¹ He discusses the case of a girl who suffered from obsessional self-reproaches. Whenever she read in the newspapers about forgery she thought she had made the counterfeit money; if she heard about a murder somewhere, she thought she had committed it. She was aware of the absurdity of these kinds of thoughts, but "this sense of guilt gained such an ascendancy over her that her powers of criticism were stifled".² The girl was completely confused by her compulsion and repeatedly criticized herself.

Freud investigated the sources of her sense of guilt and discovered them quickly: she had been excited by a chance feeling of sensuality and permitted herself to be persuaded by a girlfriend to try masturbation, conscious that this act was "wrong". She practised masturbation for years, a practice always accompanied by "violent, but, as usual, ineffective self-reproaches".³ At a certain moment in time an "excess" of self-reproach was the cause of an increase in the compulsion to reproach herself to the extent that a psychosis arose.

This short and simple case takes us directly to the core of Freud's thinking and work at this time. He had patients and listened to their complaints and he learned to see these complaints as symptoms which often had a mental cause. He discovered that relief from and even cure of some complaints was possible when its source was revealed. He learned to listen to the stories of the circumstances in which the complaints arose. He noticed quickly that patients were reluctant to talk about these circumstances and he consequently concluded that they felt compelled to keep the circumstances and sources of the complaints secret, so secret that they themselves had forgotten them. He identified the repression of incompatible thoughts as the source of his patients' complaints. And he discovered that these thoughts were usually of a sexual nature. It is in this period that Freud made his most ground-breaking discoveries: a new form of therapy as the basis for innovative theoretical formulations. He learned to pay attention to consciousness of guilt and self-reproaches, because they could lead the way to the origin of the complaint.

¹ S. Freud, *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, SE III, pp.55-56. Compare S. Freud, *Obsessions and Phobias: Their Psychological Mechanism and Their Aetiology*, SE III, p.76.

² S. Freud, *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, p.55.

³ Idem.

Although this brief case history leads us straight to the heart of Freud's work, from the 1890s there is more to it than that. One feels in this case history that he is not only speaking of sense of guilt (consciousness of guilt) but also nearly about guilt. It appears he believed that the source of sense of guilt lay in one's own guilt, for he speaks here about its origin as "wrong". He also refers to an "excess" which can exacerbate the complaints. These terms (wrong and excess) are not normal psychoanalytic or medical parlance. Consciousness of guilt also appears to have everything to do with what is taken to be morally acceptable, with that which is judged to be wrong and excessive. Indeed, this played a central role in Freud's thinking at this time. As we shall see, repression is always connected with the morally unacceptable part of a particular (sexual) idea. This primarily says a lot about the patients who came to him; but at least as important is the fact that he nonetheless did not speak about "one's own guilt" in connection with the girl's complaints. He already appreciated that the individual sense of guilt went beyond his patients' backgrounds to the (unconscious) psychic processes an individual can only comprehend with the greatest of difficulty.

Further discussion of consciousness of guilt must now also take into account (sexual) morality during the second half of the nineteenth century. In order to make this subject manageable, I shall employ a Freudian method and let Freud speak for himself about the circumstances in which his ideas arose. By letting him speak for himself, we shall have no trouble tracking the role sense of guilt played in his thinking.

1.2 "Our bugles sounding the Retreat"

The Vienna in which Sigmund Freud⁴ grew up was a city which offered great opportunities to develop oneself, a quickly changing city with an explosively growing population and a completely renovated, modernized city centre. It had a bourgeois, liberal culture with (since the collapse of the stock market in 1873) a growing anti-Semitic undercurrent.⁵

It was in this Vienna that Freud studied medicine.⁶ Completing his studies in 1881, he then worked for six years (1876-1882) in Ernst Brücke's lab as an assistant and was engaged in all kinds of research including into the male genitals

⁴ For the biographical data see E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Volumes 1-3*, Basic Books, New York, 1959; P. Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time*, Norton & Company, New York, London, 1988; A. Meyhöfer, *Eine Wissenschaft des Träumens. Sigmund Freud und seine Zeit*, btb-Verlag, Munich, 2007.

⁵ P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.15-21.

⁶ Gay mentions Freud's most important motives for studying medicine: the desire to cure diseases, the discovering of scientific truths, and the fascination for "the riddles of mind and of culture". Idem, pp.26-27.

of eels.⁷ It was Brücke who advised Freud to work at Vienna's General Hospital. First under Hermann Nothnagel, later under Theodor Meynert he studied the human nervous system, specializing in brain anatomy, a promising field but not well-developed at that time.⁸ Although he became a private teacher in 1885⁹, Freud opted to remain in academic research and went to study with Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893) in Paris.¹⁰

Freud thus grew up in liberal Vienna and would remain a liberal his entire life.¹¹ This choice was undoubtedly influenced by the anti-Semitism which was constantly in the background and which he occasionally experienced personally. He wrote to his fiancée Martha Bernays in 1883, for example, about the events which took place in the third-class compartment of a train.¹² When he opened a small window for some ventilation, he was abused by his fellow passengers as a "dirty Jew", by which he understood that Christian brotherly love did not include him. In his account to his fiancée he proudly tells how he behaved like a gentleman, in contrast to those who attacked him whom he designated "a mob, plebeians and unbelievers".

The chasm between ordinary people and the middle class, the class to which Freud considered himself to belong, was huge. A letter to Martha about attending a performance of the opera *Carmen* by Georges Bizet in 1883 is revealing here. *Carmen* premiered in Paris in 1875 to much excitement. The average Parisian was not accustomed to such intensity and ferocity in characters or music. Freud felt this and wrote that the mob was able to live spontaneously and free, whereas "we" deprive ourselves. In order to keep our integrity and to spare our health, "we" try to control our enjoyment and drives. This habit, Freud writes, of repressing natural drives gives us the quality of refinement. "We" are more concerned with

⁷ P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.32-37. Gay mentions that Freud admired "Master Brücke", and that he found satisfaction in his work. In Brücke's lab he also met Josef Breuer, who would become a friend and a founding father of psychoanalysis, as we will see.

⁸ Freud held no great esteem of Nothnagel. Hence after half a year he transferred to the department of "the great Meynert". It is in this period under Meynert that Freud wrote his technical paper *On Coca* (1884), a text on the properties of the then little-known drug cocaine. P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.42-43.

⁹ "It was a position that provided prestige but no salary." Idem, p.41.

¹⁰ On his motivation to go to Paris Freud later writes: "In the distance there shone the great name of Charcot". S. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, SE XX, p.11; P. Gay, *Freud*, p.46.

¹¹ Phillip Rieff has argued that Freud's thinking is typically liberal, for example in his rejection of Marxism or any political ideology that promises a socially perfect state. Ph. Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer*, Doubleday, New York, 1961, pp.270-273.

¹² S. Freud, *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, E.L. Freud (ed.), Basic Books, New York, 1960, pp.78-79.

avoiding suffering, than creating pleasure.¹³ He extended these thoughts in order to conclude that “the common folk judge, believe, hope and work differently than “we””: there must be something like a “psychology of the common man”.¹⁴

With a little good will – Freud spoke of “psychology” – *Carmen* can be considered a kind of short case history. He put his finger on a central theme of the opera, expressed in Don José’s dilemma in the second act duet. When Carmen dances seductively for him he hears “the bugles sounding the Retreat” to the barracks.¹⁵ José represents a choice: on the one hand is the world of law, duty and obedience and on the other the passionate, tempestuous and dangerously unconventional Carmen, the gypsies and bull fighters. He chooses Carmen and her world, chooses love over the law and therewith chooses his own downfall.¹⁶ Freud analyses and compares what he sees and hears with himself, with the world in which he lives. He compares the relations between characters with his relationship with Martha Bernays and he reaches the conclusion that there are different psychologies. The common folk judge, believe, hope and work differently than the middle class. He is doubly critical. The less developed people offer little by way of example for him. While he also muses here somewhat sadly on the disadvantages of the bourgeoisie, it is clear that he could not feel at home elsewhere. Freud feels at home in this world, a world in which he calls the repression of the passions “refinement”. The culture to which he claims allegiance recognizes a refined morality. Given its connection with the lower classes, the world of the passions lies principally outside culture.

¹³ As early as here we can detect the first outline of what Freud will later name the (un)pleasure or pleasure principle. We should notice here that this principle is not a discovery made by Freud, but an almost omnipresent principle in his intellectual environment. In general the influence of Kant’s philosophy (Neo-Kantianism) and Schopenhauer’s, Darwin’s evolutionism and Mill’s utilitarianism seem important inspirations in late nineteenth century intellectual climate. As to Freud, the influence of physiologists such as Gustav Fechner and especially Theodor Meynert should not be underestimated. E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 1*, pp.370-393; Ph. Rieff, *The Mind of the Moralist*, pp.355-359; G. Gödde, *Traditionslinien des “Unbewußten”. Schopenhauer – Nietzsche – Freud*, Edition Discord, Tübingen, 1999, pp.193-195.

Interestingly the concepts of pleasure and unpleasure also played an important role in a study of Jacob Bernays, an uncle of Freud’s fiancée Martha, on Aristotle’s theory on tragedy. In this study Bernays stressed the idea that Greek tragedy was about the staging of catharsis: passionate feelings evoking unpleasure were staged in such a way that viewers could identify. The tragedy tended towards catharsis, that is, a release of emotions resulting in relief and thus in pleasure. This process could best be compared, according to Bernays, with a physician bringing relief in the life of a patient. J. Bernays, *Zwei Abhandlungen über die aristotelische Theorie des Drama*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1968, pp.1-112 (originally 1857). The comparison between catharsis in tragedy and in cure is striking: Josef Breuer (see further) would develop a cathartic method (ab-reaction of affects) in psychotherapy after the treatment of Anna O. It is certain that Breuer was inspired by Bernays’ study on Aristotle and tragedy.

¹⁴ S. Freud, *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, pp.50-51.

¹⁵ G. Bizet, *Carmen*, A. Gheorghiu, R. Alagna, Th. Hampson, et al., M. Plasson, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, EMI, 2003.

¹⁶ *Carmen* was one of Freud’s favourite operas. (The others being Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *The Magic Flute*, and Wagner’s *Meistersinger*.) Gay has noticed that of Freud’s favourite operas *Carmen* is the only one where vice triumphs over virtue. P. Gay, *Freud*, p.169.

We shall remain briefly with the *Carmen* case, for there is another important element: Freud's observation that "we" are busier avoiding suffering than creating pleasure. It is an idea which he repeats many times in his early psychoanalytic work, supported by his practical experience as a therapist. The defence against unacceptable ideas is always central, not the pursuit of pleasure. It is an idea which reveals much of Freud's moral outlook. Three years earlier, in 1880, he had been asked to translate a part of the collected works of the liberal philosopher John Stuart Mill into German. Specifically, he worked on *The Subjection of Women* in which Mill takes a stand for women's rights. He does this against the background of his liberal ideas regarding the rights of individuals, the development of people and an ethic which one might call utilitarianism of happiness, an ethic which emphasizes the pursuit of happiness.¹⁷ In short, the basis for his ethics lies in a psychological position: humans seek what makes them happy. The psychological observation by Freud regarding *Carmen* can be seen as casting doubt on Mill's position, and indeed he also expressed criticism of Mill. Three months after the *Carmen* letter he wrote to Martha about Mill and made clear to her that normal relations between men and women should not be encroached on too much.¹⁸

It may appear that Freud's bemoaning of the middle classes' limitations on itself and its avoidance of suffering rather than the pursuit of happiness is a kind of self-criticism, but when Martha appeared to conclude that women should claim more rights for themselves, he jumped forward to champion the traditional relationship between the genders.¹⁹ These ideas regarding refinement, integrity and normal family relationships place Freud in the middle of the liberal, bourgeois culture of his day.

Much has been written about the Victorian age as a time of extreme prudery and moral virtue: the nineteenth century as the century of middle-class refinement.²⁰

¹⁷ In the final pages of *The Subjection of Women*, Mill makes perfectly clear that women suffer and are unhappy because of a lack of equal rights between the sexes: the "requisite of an enjoyable life is very imperfectly granted, or altogether denied, to a large part of mankind" which creates "the great amount of unhappiness" and "the feeling of a wasted life". Hence Mill's plea for a "perfect equality" between the sexes in order to overcome a major hindrance to human improvement. J.S. Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, in *On Liberty. With The Subjection of Women and Chapters on Socialism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, pp.119-217.

¹⁸ On Mill Freud writes Mill totally ignored the fact that "humanity is divided between men and women, and that this difference is the most important one". S. Freud, *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, pp.75-76. Gay concludes on Freud's letter about Mill that it is a "faultlessly conservative manifesto". P. Gay, *Freud*, p.39.

¹⁹ S. Freud, *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, pp.75-76.

²⁰ A standard work on Victorian morality is P. Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud, Volumes I-V*, Norton, New York, London, 1984-1998. A classic on fin-de-siècle Vienna is C. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna. Politics and Culture*, Vintage, New York, 1981. A more compact analysis of Habsburg Vienna is presented in A. Janik, S. Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, Touchstone, New York, 1973, chapter 2. A beautiful depiction of middle-class morality in Vienna can also be found in an autobiographical work by Stefan Zweig: S. Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers*, Fischer, Frankfurt, 1987, chapter 3. A more recent study on fin-de-siècle Vienna is S. Beller (ed.), *Rethinking Vienna 1900*, Berghahn Books, New York, Oxford, 2001.

Whenever Freud spoke about refinement it seems he was talking about prudery; where others let themselves go “we” restrain ourselves. Yet refinement did not mean that the passions were not feeble. They were refined, that is to say, all the strong emotions were harnessed as much as possible.²¹ The place where this happened was the family. In public life a respectable citizen was indeed respectable and avoided those subjects and actions which would evidence the contrary. Inappropriate behaviour was a characteristic of the lower classes, as he himself related so well in his anecdote about the train trip: he behaved himself, but the mob did not. This refinement concentrated itself in family life. (This was true for Freud too, who regularly gave voice to his expectations in his letters to Martha.) Ideally, the family satisfied all bourgeois ideals: a rational, liberal father, a caring mother and their children.²² These ideals, however, were under attack from all sides, from outside by the constant threat of moral and financial degradation and from within because emotions are difficult to refine.²³ For this reason the family is not only the ideal cornerstone of society, but also the source of every (sexual) derailment and the consequent sense of guilt.

Freud makes an interesting observation from this perspective when he claims that there are two psychologies, one for the common folk and another for the middle classes (the upper classes do not figure here) as regards *Carmen*. By this he obviously meant a division between decent and indecent, but we may also assume that he sensed here that the burning passion he saw in *Carmen* was also alive in his own milieu in the form of repression: the urges are there, but ideally they are refined. It is precisely in this bourgeois family, full of tension between decency and passion, that a kind of general nervousness developed at the *fin de siècle*, a “modern illness” which did not remain unobserved at that time. In the 1880s and 1890s various scientific studies of this increasing social nervousness appeared, each seeking its causes.²⁴ Some saw its origin in increasingly luxurious lifestyles and the fear of loss which comes with it. Others sought its origin primarily in a physical or hereditary abnormality. In due course Freud too clarified the origin of all modern nervousness.

²¹ In reflecting upon Freud’s letter to Martha, Gay writes that the letter is “extremely enlightening” about Victorian middle-class morality: the bourgeois character is largely built from prohibitions, self-abnegations and harnessed passions. P. Gay, *Schnitzler’s Century. The Making of Middle-Class Culture 1815-1914*, Norton, New York, London, 2002, p.26. Compare P. Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience, Volume V. Pleasure Wars*, pp.20f.

²² For a short analysis on the topic of Freud’s ideas on family life in his letters to Martha Bernays, see P. Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience, Volume I. Education of the Senses*, pp.176-177, pp.441-442.

²³ Oosterhuis describes this Vienna as a *Pressure Cooker*: Victorian morals and religious conformism go hand in hand with a cultural climate marked by underlying passions and an almost compulsive interest in sexuality. In other words, it is a culture full of hidden fantasies and conflicts. The emergence of a scientific interest in sexuality can be seen against the background of this cultural climate. H. Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature. Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2000, pp.259ff. Compare A. Janik, S. Toulmin, *Wittgenstein’s Vienna*, pp.42-43, pp.46-47.

²⁴ For examples and more detailed descriptions see chapter 3.

1.3 Moral treatment

In the autumn of 1885 Freud arrived in Paris at the famed Salpêtrière hospital where Jean-Martin Charcot taught.²⁵ For a brief period he worked in the laboratory on research into children's brains and brain paralysis in children, but he quickly fell under Charcot's spell and his psychological findings, specifically those regarding hysteria and hypnosis.²⁶ He soon became close to Charcot, not least because he translated his *Leçons sur les maladies du système nerveux* [Lectures on the Illnesses of the Nervous System] into German.²⁷

"Charcot, who is one of the greatest of physicians and a man whose common sense borders on genius, is simply wrecking all my aims and options", Freud wrote to Martha.²⁸ As concerns his scientific convictions to that point this is certainly true. Charcot's approach to hysteria was most striking for its day. Although he clearly discounted a hereditary predisposition to hysteria, he greatly stressed the family circumstances in which the illness manifested itself. Indeed, the first thing he did was to isolate the patient from their family. He called this "the moral or mental side of treatment".²⁹ He believed this essential for experience taught that although its causes are impenetrable, this separation was a necessary precondition for recovery. For Charcot hysteria was a nervous disease which manifested itself as often among men as women. It was thus a serious illness which could be studied and he conducted pioneering work which charted both its symptoms and diagnosis. The analysis of affect also played an important role here. His most important finding, however, was that a range of hysterical symptoms could be stimulated and healed with the assistance of hypnotic suggestions. A number of Charcot's

²⁵ On Charcot and Freud see for example F. Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind. Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend*, Burnett Books, London, 1979, pp.28-42.

²⁶ The psychological approach of Charcot was a "complete revelation": in Vienna Freud was used to regard neurotic diseases "a brain tumor". P. Gay, *Freud*, p.49.

²⁷ J.-M. Charcot, *Neue Vorlesungen über die Krankheiten des Nervensystems insbesondere über Hysterie*, Toeplitz und Deuticke, Leipzig, Vienna, 1886. In the preface to the translation Freud writes that he added, after consulting Charcot the term hysteria to the title. On Charcot and hysteria see G. Guillaumin, *J.M. Charcot, 1825-1893, His Life – His Work*, P.Bailey (ed.), Hoeber, New York, 1959, pp.133-146, O. Andersson, *Studies in the Prehistory of Psychoanalysis. The Aetiology of psychoneuroses and some related themes in Sigmund Freud's scientific writings and letters 1886-1896*, Svenska Bokförlaget, Stockholm, 1962, pp.47ff; M. Micale, "Charcot and the Idea of Hysteria in the Male. Gender, Mental Science, and Medical Diagnosis in Late Nineteenth-Century France", in *Medical History* 34 (1990), pp.363-411; C.G. Goetz, M. Bonduelle, T. Gelfand, *Charcot. Constructing Neurology*, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1995.

²⁸ S. Freud, *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, p.185.

²⁹ A beautiful example of a moral treatment is found in the seventeenth lesson of *Neue Vorlesungen*. In a family one of the children develops symptoms of hysteria after witnessing a spiritist séance. The other children copy the symptoms. Then they are treated in Charcot's hospital. Charcot immediately separates them from their parents. He further describes the developments: slow recovery with fewer and fewer hysterical attacks. He ends his lesson with advice for the parents: when the children are home again, never visit spiritist seances, given the vulnerable nature of children. The further "physical, moral and intellectual treatment" is now their responsibility. J.-M. Charcot, *Neue Vorlesungen*, pp.190-201. Also C.G. Goetz, M. Bonduelle, T. Gelfand, *Charcot*, pp.162-166.

findings conflicted with the prevailing medical ideas. Freud later recalled fierce discussions during which Charcot swore with an unforgettable pronouncement that theories are pretty, but that facts do not need theory in order to exist.³⁰ It was principally in this area that Charcot undermined some of Freud's convictions.

For Charcot hysteria was an illness which generally had its origins in a developmental aberration, but it is clear that he also took other causes into account. The link between an illness and the patient's family situation has already been mentioned, but he did not further develop that connection. Freud was quick to do this, undoubtedly inspired by Charcot's findings. Charcot did not, however, make the connection between hysteria and sexuality in his lectures. But Freud later recalls that one evening at Charcot's home he commented with reference to the origins of hysteria: *C'est toujours la chose génitale, toujours ... toujours ... toujours*.³¹ He undoubtedly filed this idea away, for at that time he was far too busy with neuro-physiological research to fully appreciate the scope of Charcot's exclamation.³²

Charcot realised that there were causes other than hereditary or physical ones for hysteria.³³ In his twentieth to twenty-second lectures he spoke extensively about a case where two men each had a paralyzed arm as a result of an accident.³⁴ He maintained that their complaints first surfaced sometime after the accident and proposed the hypothesis that their true cause could well be mental; that is to say, their origins were imaginary. This could be proven experimentally by means of a hypnotic neurosis.³⁵ Hypnotic suggestion can evoke a particular idea or chain of ideas which subsequently have a "motor" effect. In short, the idea of being paralyzed resulted in these two patients' actual paralysis. The idea or chain of ideas (ideas linked by association) is strictly isolated; in other words, they are not part of the consciousness, the "ego".³⁶ Thus, Charcot describes, we must assume that the physical symptoms "automatically" arise from "unconscious mental processes", a mechanism Charcot denoted with the verb *traduire*, which Freud translated

³⁰ S. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, p.13.

³¹ S. Freud, *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*, p.14.

³² This does not mean that brain anatomy was a scientific discipline completely detached from psychological or even philosophical ideas. On the contrary, Theodor Meynert for example writes in *Gehirn und Gesittung* (1889), a lecture in which he describes the evolution of the species culminating in man and his evolution from primitive being to civilized man, that the level of civilization of man depends on his ability to restrain his drives. In other words, a biological evolution, inspired by Darwin, and made "visible" in brain anatomy, naturally evolves in ideas on the moral (and religious) development of man. Th. Meynert, *Gehirn und Gesittung*, in *Sammlung von populär wissenschaftlichen Vorträgen über den Bau und die Leistungen des Gehirns*, Braumüller, Vienna, Leipzig, 1892, pp.139-179 (169ff, see also next chapter).

³³ C.G. Goetz, M. Bonduelle, T. Gelfand, *Charcot*, pp.205ff.

³⁴ For the following passage see J.-M. Charcot, *Neue Vorlesungen*, pp.242-306; J.-M. Charcot, *Leçons sur les maladies du système nerveux faites à la Salpêtrière. Tome III*, Progrès Médical, Paris, 1877, pp.299-369.

³⁵ J.-M. Charcot, *Neue Vorlesungen*, p.274.

³⁶ *Idem*, p. 275.

as *projiciren*.³⁷ When Charcot charted the process of hypnotic suggestion more deeply he observed that when awakened from the hypnotic state the patient often displayed resistance to what had been suggested.

When Freud wrote to Martha that his convictions were being undermined, he did not fail to add that Charcot's lessons had enriched him enormously. It was principally lessons such as the one described above which provided food for thought. Various terms which Charcot used would later play major roles in Freud's thought: the mental origins of physical symptoms, conscious and unconscious processes, and resistance. What he certainly also noticed is that Charcot had an eye and an ear for the circumstances in which a symptom developed and paid attention to the person's biography, including his family circumstances. And naturally there was the phenomenon of hypnosis: hypnotic suggestion as a therapeutic remedy. In addition to other therapies (electrotherapy and massage techniques), hypnosis led to what later became known as psychoanalysis.³⁸

Terribly enthusiastic, Freud returned to Vienna to give a lecture in the autumn of 1886 to a group of physicians on hysteria in men. This lecture was received exceedingly coldly³⁹ and from that moment Freud began increasingly to go his own way.

1.4 A morally disturbing case

Freud's interest in hypnosis was not awakened in Paris, he had already become interested in the subject while in Vienna. In 1883 he wrote to Martha about a conversation he had had with Josef Breuer (1842-1925), a friend and colleague at the hospital, regarding moral insanity in which Bertha Pappenheim (known as Anna O.) appeared.⁴⁰

³⁷ Idem. J.-M. Charcot, *Leçons sur les maladies du système nerveux*, p.337. As far as I have been able to ascertain, this is the first time Freud uses the word "projection" strictly in a clinical sense. It is interesting to note here that Freud was already familiar with the concept for it played an important role in the writings of Meynert. Central in Meynert's theory on the human brain is the cerebral cortex on which all sensory impressions are "projected" and from where a worldview is projected in consciousness. In other words a worldview is not something taken up by the brain from the outside, but created by the cerebral cortex and then projected in consciousness. Meynert regards this idea as a further proof of Immanuel Kant's theories on perception. Th. Meynert, *Zur Mechanik des Gehirnbauens*, in *Sammlung von populär-wissenschaftlichen Vorträgen über den Bau und die Leistungen des Gehirns*, pp.19-40 (23-24). Freud criticizes Meynert's theory on the function of the cerebral cortex and the projection mechanism in *On Aphasia* (1891). That is to say, he criticizes Meynert's theory of projection on the cerebral cortex, not the projection of a worldview in consciousness. S. Freud, *On Aphasia. A Critical Study*, International Universities Press, New York, 1953, pp.44-54. See also E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 1*, pp.375-376.

³⁸ Later Freud would write that despite all progress Charcot was essentially an anatomist with a limited interest in the psychology of neurosis. S. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, p.14.

³⁹ E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 1*, pp.229ff; A. Meyhöfer, *Eine Wissenschaft des Träumens*, pp.98ff.

⁴⁰ S. Freud, *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, pp.40-41.

Breuer treated Anna O. from 1880 until 1882. Anna O., intelligent, cultured, beautiful and educated, came to Breuer with complaints which indicated hysteria, complaints which chiefly arose on account of the fatiguing care she provided to her terminally ill father.⁴¹ After her father's death the symptoms became even more severe. Breuer visited her daily at that time and found Anna O. in a self-induced hypnotic state. She told Breuer everything and that provided some temporary relief. She called this her "talking cure".⁴² Forgotten, repressed memories surfaced and she was able to speak about all kinds of emotions at length. Breuer was able to derive his cathartic method from these experiences: allowing patients to speak under hypnosis about the conditions under which the complaints had begun, thus enabling the strong emotions to be released.⁴³

Freud was extraordinarily interested in this case. During amicable talks he regularly asked Breuer about his results.⁴⁴ (At this time, Freud and Breuer were close friends.) Freud's primary interest was in the success of the cathartic method and hypnosis. Upon his return from Paris in 1886 he decided to begin his own private medical practice. Breuer was one of those who sent him patients. The most important therapeutic means at his disposal was hypnosis. Freud initially remained true to Charcot: hypnosis is an artificial hysteria, possible to induce only in those with a predisposition to it. This attitude changed, however. In 1889 he made a brief trip to Nancy where Hypolyte Bernheim (1840-1919) was experimenting with hypnosis. Bernheim maintained that hypnosis was a matter of suggestion and, moreover, that everyone was susceptible to it. Freud was impressed.⁴⁵ He later wrote that he recalled one experiment particularly well.⁴⁶ After being hypnotised,

⁴¹ J. Breuer, S. Freud, *Studies on Hysteria, SE II*, pp.21ff. A thorough depiction of Breuer's treatment of Anna O. can be found in A. Hirschmüller, *Physiologie und Psychoanalyse in Leben und Werk Josef Breuers*, Verlag Hans Huber, Tübingen, 1978, pp.131-151, pp.170-178.

⁴² J. Breuer, S. Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, p.30.

⁴³ Anna O. had called her treatment by Breuer her "talking cure" in her own "private theatre": talking about her complaints meant a release of inner tension. Anna O. can therefore be seen as the patient who discovered the cathartic method. However, the cathartic method was not formulated during the treatment of Anna O., but in the years afterwards, and mentioned for the first time in 1893. A. Hirschmüller, *Physiologie und Psychoanalyse*, pp.206-212, A. Meyerhöfer, *Eine Wissenschaft des Träumens*, p.108.

⁴⁴ E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 1*, pp.223-226; P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.63-67.

⁴⁵ Bernheim was also aware of the moral implications of his hypnosis theory. People are by definition under the suggestive influence of those who raise them and adopt others' ideas. If hypnotic suggestions remained active over long periods of time, then this would present the possibility, for example, to re-educate criminals. H. Bernheim, *Hypnosis and Suggestion in Psychotherapy*, University Books, New York, 1964, chapter 9. Freud translated Bernheim's *De la suggestion et ses applications à la thérapeutique* (1886) and *Hypnotisme, suggestion, psychothérapie : études nouvelles* (1892) into German: *Hypnotismus und Suggestion* (1888) and *Hypnotismus, Suggestion und Psychotherapie* (1892). For the first of the two translations, Freud wrote a preface focussing on the main problems the method of suggestion had raised: the relationship between psychical and physiological processes, and how consciousness could be related to these processes. S. Freud, *Preface to the Translation of Bernheim's Suggestion, SE I*, pp.75-85.

⁴⁶ S. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, pp.17-18.

a patient appeared to be unable to remember anything said or done during the hypnosis, but with a little urging the patient was indeed able to recall something. He decided to apply this to his own patients. The logic was convincing: that which a patient knows while under hypnosis must be retained after coming out of it. Freud's following step was then simple: one does not need hypnosis in order to recover that which is hidden. A sofa and some gentle urging were all that was needed.

Freud's interest in Anna O. is not only linked with the fate of hypnosis. In a peculiar way it had also to do with sexuality and morality. Breuer and Anna O. had daily and intense contact. What Freud would later call transference and counter-transference – unconscious feelings and ideas in the patient-therapist relationship – quickly came into play.⁴⁷ But the libidinal nature of these feelings, as Freud later recalls, is ignored by Breuer and hence he was unable to fully understand her hysteria.⁴⁸ Breuer himself tried another way to understand his complex relationship with Anna O. When he wrote about her in *Studies on Hysteria*, he differentiated between her normal and her naughty or bad self⁴⁹ – the latter also malevolently influenced her “moral habit of mind”.⁵⁰ When Breuer spoke about malicious hysterics in the theoretical part of this study, he proposed that this malevolence stemmed from falling victim to a temporary absence of her normal, true and morally good nature.⁵¹ Between the lines one can read how Breuer attempted to keep his distance from Anna O., whose mental state he repeatedly denotes as morally “disturbed”. He did notice that Anna O. was tortured by a sense of guilt, that she idolized her father and that her symptoms became more tragic after his death, but he focused more on the “split” between her normal and her bad self⁵² than on the inner conflicts between the two. The connection with repressed sexual desire was not made. It was just these elements of the case, those Breuer could or would not handle, which would be crucial for Freud.

1.5 Moral character

Beginning in 1886 Freud treated patients, female patients. From the early 1890s we begin to see psychological reflections on this experience. The first of these is *Psychical (or Mental) Treatment*.⁵³ He had already noticed that all kinds of

⁴⁷ S. Freud, *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*, p.12.

⁴⁸ S. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, p.26. See also L. Freeman, *Freud and Women*, Frederick Ungar Publishing, New York, 1981, pp.131ff; P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.66-67.

⁴⁹ J. Breuer, S. Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, p.24, p.46.

⁵⁰ *Idem*, p.46.

⁵¹ *Idem*, pp.41-47.

⁵² *Idem*, p.45.

⁵³ S. Freud, *Psychical (or Mental) Treatment*, SE VII. In the *Gesammelte Werke* and in the *Standard Edition*, this text is wrongly dated “1905”.

physical symptoms were influenced by moods. Psychological states influenced the body. This is most evident in affects (and he noted that each mental action is emotionally charged). Will, too, had a great effect upon the body, as being imaginative or expectant demonstrates. As an example of the latter he pointed to pilgrims' miraculous cures.⁵⁴ Individual expectations are given an enormous boost by the number of people and their expectations. Circumstances are determinative here, and from this idea he later also indicated that the physician's personality can call forth certain expectations. In this regard he spoke about hypnosis as a means of dominating a person's will: the patient became obedient and faithful.⁵⁵

It is striking that Freud did not discuss the moral implications. He did recognize the power of the hypnotiser and the virtually endless possibilities for healing, by which he meant "being normal". Virtually endless, for every hypnotiser quickly notices that the patient develops resistance to tasks he or she does not want to carry out because they are seen as morally objectionable. A crucial theme is thereby touched upon: whenever people do not want to do something they can offer powerful resistance.

Freud still relied heavily upon other people's theories, but he simultaneously learned a great deal from interacting with patients. The most important of his early patients was Cécilie M., baroness Anna von Lieben, a highly intelligent woman.⁵⁶ Her treatment concentrated on abreaction. It was from patients like her that he learned to listen to the stories behind their symptoms, stories about the circumstances in which the complaints had first manifested themselves. This is how he noticed that memories, usually forgotten, can suddenly resurface and have an influence on physical symptoms. Abreaction brings temporary relief after which, however, anxiety and desperation increase again. Freud cites a specific anecdote in which Cécilie M. asked despairingly whether he found her a "worthless person" after what she had told him the previous day. When they reviewed what they had spoken about the previous day, however, it was revealed that nothing improper had come up. The next hypnotic session revealed the memory of an old self-reproach. It appears that here a forgotten incident "which had aroused severe self-reproaches" was making itself felt, although during therapy she no longer "subscribed to them in the least". One might say that even with this early patient Freud encountered old senses of guilt which had their effect on the present. Thus as he learned to listen to patients he was also learning to listen to expressions of guilt.

In 1892 Freud wrote *A Case of Successful Treatment by Hypnotism* a work which proceeded from a case in which hypnosis played a central role, but where halfway through a question is posed which is more fundamental: what is the mechanism

⁵⁴ Idem, p.289.

⁵⁵ Idem, p.291, p.296.

⁵⁶ Freud wrote about Cécilie M. in a detailed footnote in *Studies on Hysteria*, pp.69-70. Anna von Lieben had already been one of Charcot's patients in the late 1880s. Possibly she was sent to Freud for treatment by her brother-in-law Franz Brentano (see 1.8). C.G. Goetz, M. Bonduelle, T. Gelfand, *Charcot*, p.252; A. Meyhöfer, *Eine Wissenschaft des Träumens*, p.104.

behind a patient's complaints?⁵⁷ He reasoned as follows. There are ideas (of what someone will do – intentions – or of what will happen – expectations) which are linked to affects. Such an affect is determined by the importance of the idea's effect and by its degree of uncertainty. Uncertainty is expressed in so-called “distressing antithetic ideas”. In healthy people, those with a strong self-confidence, these antithetic ideas are consciously assessed and either rejected or forcefully repressed without ever returning to consciousness. In the neurotic this repression appears to work, but the “weakness of will”⁵⁸ of the individual permits the antithetic idea to return as “counter-will”.⁵⁹ This counter-will finds expression in hysteria via physical symptoms. Freud even went a step further here by claiming that the counter-will is demonstrable in hysterics, for example, when they cannot do what they most desire, or curse what is dearest to them, or do the opposite of what they really want to.

The idea that hysteria stems from a hereditary disposition plays no decisive role here any more⁶⁰: Freud focuses on the meaning of ideas and expectations on the one hand and on self-confidence and weakness of will on the other. Hysteria is no longer an illness of degenerates but rather an expression of a conflict between certain ideas and a consciousness which judges and weighs these ideas. He can thus claim that “as anyone will know”, the “most irreproachable characters” are often afflicted with hysteria.⁶¹ The cultural (moral and religious) background of individuals now becomes important. After all, it largely determines the meaning attached to an intention or expectation. Philip Rieff believed this to be a central discovery: neurosis is not an organic defect, nor a strange entity within a patient, nor a collection of symptoms. Neurosis relates to the entire person, his or her “moral character”.⁶² It does not deal principally with a passive person who has given himself or herself over to that which has been thrust upon him/her, but with a person who makes active choices, desires or does not desire, does something or nothing, and also pushes or represses ideas. This moral character is always part of a broader social-cultural morality.

A person's uncertainty about undertaking or not undertaking a meaningful plan provides space for the rise of a powerful contrast idea or counter-will which consequently objectifies one way or another. In the case of Emmy von N. (Fanny Moser) in *Studies on Hysteria*, this is the mechanism which explains her tic.⁶³

⁵⁷ S. Freud, *A Case of Successful Treatment by Hypnotism*, SE I, p.121.

⁵⁸ Idem, p.123.

⁵⁹ Idem, p.122.

⁶⁰ In the early 1890s Freud clearly distanced himself from Charcot who, according to Freud, overemphasized the hereditary disposition in hysteria. O. Andersson, *Studies in the Prehistory of Psychoanalysis*, pp.80ff.

⁶¹ S. Freud, *A Case of Successful Treatment by Hypnotism*, p.127.

⁶² Ph. Rieff, *The Mind of the Moralists*, pp.11-12, p.40.

⁶³ J. Breuer, S. Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, pp.92-93. Freud treated Emmy von N. in 1889-1890 using Breuer's techniques. P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.70-71.

Freud immediately added that Breuer's cathartic method offered no consolation here due to Emmy's resistance to examining the conflict between "will" and "counter-will".⁶⁴ Meanwhile, Freud remained impressed by Emmy's morally principled character: he praised her for the fact that despite strong sexual needs she succeeded in repressing the most powerful urges. She was, according to Freud, a lady with a nearly masculine intelligence, with "moral seriousness" in her view of her "duties", a lady of refined manners.⁶⁵ That appealed to Freud.

1.6 A defensive ego

Freud's attention shifted from abreaction (central to the cathartic method) to defence. He was continually confronted by the therapeutic fact that painful memories could not always be abreacted.⁶⁶ Hysterics suffered from traumatic memories. By trauma he understood a psychic trauma rather than a physical accident, that is to say, the subsequent affect of fright.⁶⁷ The problem was that these memories remained affect-loaded over long periods of time while the memories were not available to conscious thought. Evidently, ideas which had become pathogenic were excluded from conscious associations and thus also could not be abreacted. Freud then hypothesised that hysteria is a "dual consciousness" in which one group of ideas is "dissociated" from the other.⁶⁸

He pursued this line of thinking in his 1894 *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*. Freud agreed with Breuer that there was a splitting of consciousness among hysterics.⁶⁹ He observed that the origin of this split had not been adequately explained. He dismissed the idea that it stemmed from an innate weakness or degeneracy. Calling upon his clinical experience, he developed the thesis that this split in consciousness is the result of an "act of will".⁷⁰

⁶⁴ J. Breuer, S. Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, p.101.

⁶⁵ Idem, p.103. To put it simply in a formula: the high moral and intellectual development corresponds with stronger repression of drives. M. Vansina, *Het super-ego. Oorsprong en ontwikkeling van S. Freud's opvattingen over het normerende en het morele in de mens*, Standaard Wetenschappelijke Uitgeverij, Antwerpen, Utrecht, 1968, p.36.

⁶⁶ S. Freud, *On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: A Lecture*, SE III, p.37. Also P. Verhaeghe, *Tussen histerie en vrouw. Van Freud tot Lacan: een weg door honderd jaar psychoanalyse*, Acco, Leuven, 1996, pp.16ff.

⁶⁷ S. Freud, *On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena*, p.38. Freud defines this psychic trauma as an "accretion of excitation in the nervous system, which the latter has been unable to dispose of adequately by motor reaction". S. Freud, *Extracts from Freud's Footnotes to his Translation of Charcot's Tuesday Lectures*, SE I, p.137.

⁶⁸ S. Freud, *On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena*, p.39.

⁶⁹ S. Freud, *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, p.46. On this text see O. Andersson, *Studies in the Pre-history of Psychoanalysis*, pp.121ff; U. May-Tolzmann, *Freud's frühe klinische Theorie (1894-1896). Wiederentdeckung und Rekonstruktion*, Edition Discord, Tübingen, 1996, pp.22-28.

⁷⁰ S. Freud, *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, p.46.

Freud noticed with a group of patients that they were mentally healthy until an event took place which was so emotionally painful that the person decided to forget it. Freud also maintained that amongst female patients these ideas were generally sexual.⁷¹ These patients appeared to do everything to push away these ideas, to not think about them. The mechanism works as follows: the defensive “ego”⁷² wants to act as if a certain incompatible idea has “never arrived”, but that is impossible for the idea already exists. The solution is to make a strong idea weak. This can be done by uncoupling the idea from the affect with which it is loaded. The idea is then made impotent, but the “sum of excitation”⁷³ remains and must somehow be accommodated or drained off. For the hysteric that means conversion, that is to say that the affect is given expression somatically (conversion). It seems possible that the affect can be reattached to the original idea if one is able to reconstruct the memory-trace by association. If successful, then the affect can be drained off in conscious thought and speech.⁷⁴

Although the splitting of consciousness is not typical of the hysteric, conversion is. When dealing with compulsive ideas or phobias incompatible ideas are also fended off. This is also generally true as regards sexual ideas. The “talking cure” permits these ideas to be “retranslated into sexual terms”.⁷⁵ As an example of this Freud relates the case of the girl who compulsively reproached herself. This case was briefly described at the beginning of this chapter. He subjected her to

⁷¹ Idem, p.47.

⁷² In this period the concept of ego is synonymous to person or consciousness. O. Andersson, *Studies in the Prehistory of Psychoanalysis*, p.126.

⁷³ This sum of excitation possesses the characteristics of a quantity of energy, comparable to “an electric charge” or “a flow of electric fluid”. In other words, Freud is describing psychical processes in physicist’s terms. S. Freud, *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, pp.60-61. The use of an idiom derived from the natural sciences is particularly dominant in Freud’s earlier psychological papers in the 1890s, the period of transition from neuropsychology to psychoanalysis. In *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895), he writes that his intention is to develop a psychology as a “natural science”, “to represent psychical processes as quantitatively determinate states of specifiable material particles”. In concrete terms this meant defining concepts such as conversion and discharge in terms of “neuronal excitation as quantity in a state of flow”. Notably with regard to the pleasure-unpleasure mechanism, Freud turns to the writings of the experimental psychologist Gustav Theodor Fechner (1801-1887) and his so-called “principle of constancy”, that is, increase of the quantity of neurones leads to unpleasure, and discharge of quantity leads to pleasure. The “principle” is the psychical apparatus endeavouring to keep the quantity of excitation as low as possible or at least constant. (Later, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud will rename the “principle of constancy” as the “Nirvana principle”. S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, SE XVIII, p.56). In comparison to *Project* and the aim to develop a psychology as “natural science” *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) shows in an important further development: the psychic unpleasure principle now has “analogies” in physical processes, that is, in “neuronal excitation” and the discharge of “quantities”. In other words, psychological processes are emancipated from physiological processes. S. Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, SE I, pp.295-315; S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE V, p.599. On Fechner and Freud see E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 1, pp.373-375, pp.379-393; E. Scheerer, H. Hildebrandt, “Was Fechner an eminent Psychologist?”, in *G.T. Fechner and Psychology*, Josef Brožek, H. Gundlach (eds.), Passavia Universitätsverlag, Passau, 1988, pp.269-281; P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.79-80.

⁷⁴ S. Freud, *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, pp.48-49.

⁷⁵ Idem, p.54.

“close questioning” aimed at the demolition of her defences and the facilitating of associations. In light of the foregoing this is what is going on: sense of guilt is in fact a symptom of the affect that has been uncoupled from the original insufferable idea (masturbation) and transposed to another idea (forgery and murder). In this case the insufferability of the idea is expressed with the terms in wrong-doing and excess.

The ideas set out in *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence* are in fact supported by the case of Elisabeth von R. – a young woman named Ilona Weiss who began therapy in 1892 – in *Studies on Hysteria*.⁷⁶ She came to Freud with vague complaints: a painful fatigue and indeterminate pain principally in her upper leg. He suspected quickly that Elisabeth secretly knew the source of (and the circumstances surrounding) her complaints. He abandoned hypnosis and permitted the patient to tell her story or, as he put it, in a “confession”.⁷⁷ Lying on a sofa with her eyes closed, Elisabeth was insistently interviewed, with Freud pressing his hand on her head now and again. She talked about her nervous mother and her special bond with her father, who regarded her as a son and friend. Her life was delightful until her father became seriously ill; Elisabeth cared for him intensely for a year and a half. It was during this period that the complaints first manifested themselves. Her father eventually died. An unhappy year followed during which she resolved to retrieve the lost happiness for her family, a resolution which was frustrated by her brother-in-law. She got along better with another brother-in-law who was a less egoistic and more refined person. Just at the moment when her greatest worries (about her mother) appeared to be behind her, Elisabeth developed serious health complaints and went to stay at a spa. Her sister then died of a heart condition and she could not return in time to see her before she could bid her farewell. She became depressed again and saw her resolution fade.

Freud compared what followed to archaeological excavation.⁷⁸ Each story is a new layer which lies closer to the core of the problem. An inner conflict arose. Elisabeth faithfully cared for her father, but when she went out with a young man, his condition worsened. She reproached herself that her pleasure was at the cost of her father’s suffering. The consequence was that she banished the “erotic desire” (pleasure with young men) from her consciousness.⁷⁹ And what of her painful leg? Freud linked this with the care Elisabeth gave her father based on sundry associations and memories. Therapy proceeded in this way and Freud noticed that Elisabeth’s resistance against his insistence was growing. It was then that he encountered the core conflict. At a certain point Elisabeth wanted to marry a man like her beloved brother-in-law. When her sister died and she was standing with

⁷⁶ On this case see L. Freeman, *Freud and Women*, pp.159-163. Freud treated Elisabeth von R. in the period 1892-1894, first and only briefly using hypnosis, than after that just talking. P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.71-72.

⁷⁷ J. Breuer, S. Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, p.139.

⁷⁸ *Idem*, p.139.

⁷⁹ *Idem*, p.164.

her brother-in-law at the foot of her deathbed she thought, “Now he is free again and I can be his wife”.⁸⁰

This was the intolerable idea which via conversion gave rise to the hysterical symptoms. A mental cluster formed around this idea which was kept out of consciousness for she “resisted by her whole moral being”.⁸¹ In his analysis of the case Freud makes clear from the start that hysteria in general and Elisabeth’s in particular cannot be traced back to degeneration. After all, the patient’s character evidenced the opposite: talent, ambition, a moral sensibility, an excessive demand for love which, to begin with, her family was satisfied, and an independence which surpassed the ideal of a woman (obstinacy, pugnacity, and reserve).⁸² This character description is where Freud actually worked out what he meant by “moral character”.

Freud wrote about the character of hysterics. He was fundamentally concerned with moral character. Various elements of everything I have discussed thus far come together here. What was intuitively suspected in *Carmen* is here, with a patient such as Elisabeth, worked through. “We”, the Viennese middle class, have a different psychology than the common folk. Our hysterics are refined. They include all kinds of desires, feelings which would normally be channelled in the refined environment of the family. In Elisabeth’s character sketch this also plays a central role: she has a great need for love and sought liberation along customary lines, namely within the family. She has a moral sensibility which seems chiefly to consist of a strong sense of duty to family members and her wish to make them happy. In this case family life is extraordinarily strong: Elisabeth’s entire story, with all of its twists and turns is a single, tragic family history. All meaningful ideas and everything that is emotionally charged is linked to relations between family members. We have already seen that this cannot be considered Freud’s discovery: Charcot had already stated this forcefully, though without drawing any further conclusions, besides isolation of the patients and the intuition that behind the symptoms there was “always something genital”.

In my view, part of Elisabeth’s character sketch appears to relate to Freud’s letter to Martha about John Stuart Mill. In that letter Freud clearly airs his views on women and their social role. In the character sketch he now speaks of an independence which went beyond the feminine ideal, which expressed itself in obstinacy, pugnacity and reserve. What that feminine ideal precisely is he does not say, but evidently it is an ideal which does not permit a great deal of autonomy. In other words, his ideas regarding the place of women resonate here.

To my mind, this “ideal” also explains why Freud only lightly touched upon wrong-doing and excess in the cases about sense of guilt in *The Neuro-Psychoses*

⁸⁰ Idem, p.156.

⁸¹ Idem, p.157.

⁸² Idem, p.161.

of Defence. Masturbation had no place in a refined environment. The girl's sense of guilt is indicative of that concept: she let herself be seduced into doing something improper and therefore also intolerable. There is an insufferable tension between erotic desire and moral ideas.⁸³

Freud's inclination to speak about "one's own guilt" is understandable when seen against the background of his thinking on repression, which he also developed at this time. Repression is an active process of "not wanting to know". An unbearable idea is deliberately pushed out of consciousness. In the theoretical part of *Studies on Hysteria* this is only brought to the fore a few times. Ideas which can lead to feelings of shame, reproach and mental pain⁸⁴ are preferably not experienced and forgotten – they are repressed, which results in a splitting within the consciousness. The thoughts become for the ego a "not knowing" or actually better put as a "not wanting to know – a not wanting which might be to a greater or less extent conscious".⁸⁵ Freud also noted this mechanism in the case of Lucy R. She had intentionally repressed a certain unbearable idea.⁸⁶ Because repression is seen here by Freud as a conscious activity, it is also understandable that he seemed to link a strong consciousness of guilt with guilt itself. It is not only that something has happened to or is done by the masturbating girl which is morally unacceptable (a wrong-doing), but her sense of guilt is once again the consequence of a later, conscious repression. Consciousness of guilt is thus here the result of what was initially an active, conscious, pleasurable deed.

Yet Freud did not speak about one's own guilt. He spoke about will and counter-will, about idea and contra-idea. In other words, he not only spoke about a "split" (like Breuer) but also about inner conflicts. This was clear in every "layer" of Elisabeth's story, for example. She created her own hysterical pain and she reproached herself, but these are the result of a conflict between duty and erotic desires. That is the core of her self-reproach in her story of the care she gave her father and her evening out with a young man with whom she was in love. At a deeper level and "of higher ethical significance"⁸⁷, a similar conflict repeated itself when she wanted her brother-in-law as her own husband while standing with him at her sister's deathbed. This kind of moral conflict is an inner conflict. Freud did not further elaborate in his character sketch of hysterics on the environment that can pressure a weak person and demand repression. Hysterics are not people who easily succumb to the pressure of their environment. On the contrary, hysterics are strong people, ambitious, bellicose, stubborn, etc. It is part of a strong character

⁸³ Idem, p.164.

⁸⁴ Idem, p.269.

⁸⁵ Idem, p.270.

⁸⁶ Idem, p.116. Lucy R. was treated by Freud in 1892. Gay mentions that Freud owed a great deal to patients like Elisabeth von R. and Lucy R.: "by 1892, Freud had assembled the outlines of psycho-analytic technique: close observation, apt interpretation, free association unencumbered by hypnosis, and working through". P. Gay, *Freud*, p.73.

⁸⁷ J. Breuer, S. Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, p.164.

that hysterics are also “morally sensitive”. Hysterics’ conflict is a moral conflict; their character is a moral character.

It is thus not their own guilt, not only by virtue of a morally sensitive character, but also because symptoms, such as self-reproach and guilt, often appear only after some time has passed. Patients are not themselves conscious of the origin of their symptoms. This origin is only found with difficulty, for a great deal of resistance must be overcome. Elisabeth, for example, was not conscious of her love for her brother-in-law and was thus also not conscious of the conflict between her desires and her moral ideas. Mainly on account of the time difference between cause and effect, she could not see the link between symptom and conflict without first having to overcome her resistance.

1.7 *Self-reproach*

Although at first sight *Studies on Hysteria* may imply otherwise, Freud’s cooperation with Breuer was very problematic.⁸⁸ Freud’s discoveries were not embraced by Breuer. It is not so strange, then, that in 1894 Freud wrote to Wilhelm Fliess (1858-1928) that he was seen as a “monomaniac”.⁸⁹ Freud and Fliess (an equally “monomaniacal” physician) had a close friendship in the 1890s.⁹⁰ In their correspondence Freud aired his latest thoughts and discoveries in several theoretical “drafts”.

In draft B on the aetiology of neuroses (1893), Freud put forward the hypothesis that neurasthenia was “always only a sexual neurosis”.⁹¹ Freud had evidently broadened his purview. In addition to hysteria, neurasthenia also became an object of research. His clear ambition at the time, to develop a comprehensive theory regarding neuroses, explains his interest in this new field.

Neurasthenia was a term introduced by George Beard⁹² in 1869 and was regarded in the 1880s and 1890s as the great neurotic symptom, alongside hysteria. The

⁸⁸ Gay writes that the decline of the friendship between Breuer and Freud already started in the late 1880s, notably after the case of Anna O. Things turned worse in the early 1890s especially after Breuer’s critical reception of Freud’s *On Aphasia* (which was dedicated to Breuer). P. Gay, *Freud*, p.67. Shortly after the publication of *Studies on Hysteria* their friendship ended. A. Hirschmüller, *Physiologie und Psychoanalyse*, pp.244-256.

⁸⁹ S. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904*, J.M. Masson (ed.), Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.), London, 1985, p.74. On Freud and Fliess see for example F. Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind*, pp.135-237.

⁹⁰ On Fliess – an ear, nose and throat specialist from Berlin – as “intimate friend and a hated enemy” see P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.55ff, pp.154-155.

⁹¹ S. Freud, *Draft B. The Aetiology of the Neuroses*, *SE I*, p.179.

⁹² On several occasions Freud refers to neurasthenia as “Beard’s neurasthenia”. For example S. Freud, *Heredity and the Aetiology of Neuroses*, *SE III*, p.144, p.146. Beard, an American neurologist had introduced the concept in *Sexual Neurasthenia (Nervous Exhaustion), its Hygiene, Causes, Symptoms and Treatment* (1884). He regarded neurasthenia as a mental illness originating in modern civilization due to factors such as stress, intoxication or traumatic accidents. See also chapter 3.

term can be translated as a weakness of the nerves or, simply, nervousness. As stated earlier, the final decade of the nineteenth century was characterized by a general nervousness. Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902), for example, called it the main *fin-de-siècle* illness (also known as neuropsychosis) and described sufferers as “someone who is blasé, dissatisfied with the world, confused about his ethnicity or religion, disaffected with the status quo, aspires to renewal, gripped by fear of an uncertain future, and suffers from pessimism”.⁹³ It is a decadent mental weakness, an illness with numerous symptoms, physical as well as mental. Freud adopted this concept, for example in his *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, discussed above. Characteristic mental symptoms included compulsive ideas, phobias and depression. Thus when Freud first spoke about sense of guilt this took place within the framework of his research into neurasthenia.⁹⁴

Freud was also aware of the social influence upon neuroses. In draft B he makes a direct link between a sexual neurosis and “an abnormal sexual life”.⁹⁵ The manuscript ultimately implies that his discoveries had led to a socially critical standpoint. He specifies three elements of an abnormal sexual life: masturbation (which leaves its mark from puberty, particularly on men), coitus interruptus and the rhythm method, both linked with marriage. He reached the conclusion that these neuroses can be prevented but not cured.⁹⁶ Prevention of an abnormal sexual life is a social matter, clearly linked with sexual morality. Acceptance of condom use and freer sexual relations are the keys. Should these not be accepted, then society runs the risk of a collective neurosis with all its consequences, including the disruption of conjugal relations, and then even “the lower strata of society” will evidence signs of these neuroses.⁹⁷

What Freud proposes here appears to be a kind of freer sexual morality and therewith a criticism of the negative effects of the refined way the middle classes channel their passions. After all, his patients were demonstrating the negative effects of this strict bourgeois morality. Thus it appears to be criticism. Yet one can also view these ideas as an attempt to adapt bourgeois morality to circumstance. The references to marriage and masturbation chiefly indicate that the aim is to restore normal sexual relations, normal meaning refined. Essentially, small adaptations enjoy relatively large success.

⁹³ R. von Krafft-Ebing, *Nervosität und neurasthenische Zustände*, Hölder, Vienna, 1895, p.50. Krafft-Ebing stresses the innate psychic structures as the main cause of nervousness, but also pays a lot of attention to social circumstances, notably by making a connection with Darwin’s “struggle for life” not only in society but also in family life. See also U. May-Tolzmänn, *Freuds frühe klinische Theorie*, pp.93ff.

⁹⁴ Freud would soon criticize the concept of neurasthenia as such and differentiate it into anxiety neurosis, obsessional neurosis and phobias. After having done so, the concept of neurasthenia disappears from his vocabulary.

⁹⁵ S. Freud, *Draft B*, p.179.

⁹⁶ *Idem*, p.183.

⁹⁷ *Idem*, p.184.

In a letter to Fliess dated 21 May 1894 he went even a step further: all incompatible ideas and all their concomitant emotions can be traced back to sexual excitation.⁹⁸ In other words, all neuroses have their source in disturbances in sexual life. When he wrote here about abnormal sexuality he was referring to events (such as masturbation), but from the start he tried to choose his words carefully. On 22 June, a month later, he wrote in draft E about sexual excitation and provided a few clarifications regarding what he meant by this. An anxiety neurosis begins as follows: coitus interruptus (for example) leads to the physical accrual of sexual tension. If this physical tension cannot be mentally processed (as a result of insufficient development of psychical sexuality, of repression of or alienation from physical or mental sexuality) anxiety is the result.⁹⁹ He placed this theory alongside the development of depression, which is the consequence of a damming-up of psychosexual tension.

At the time Freud began to discover the importance of sexuality he had no clear definition of what it was. Sexuality is used here as an umbrella term, but the concept would become increasingly important to his theoretical considerations regarding defence. What is being defended against, asks Freud in *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, that is so insufferable? Sexuality, as in the case of the girl with the guilty conscience. On 15 October 1895, Freud wrote to Fliess: “hysteria is the consequence of a pre-sexual (pre-pubescent) sexual shock” and “obsessional neurosis is the consequence of a pre-sexual sexual pleasure, which is later transformed into (self-) reproach.¹⁰⁰ In December he supplemented this by stating that all compulsive ideas are reproaches and that hysteria can always be traced back to a conflict between sexual pleasure and unpleasure.¹⁰¹ In draft H (March 1895) Freud explored paranoia, which can be seen as a variant to obsessional neurosis. Sexual excitement is transmuted into self-reproach, but here this self-reproach for being a bad person is defended against through the projection mechanism. The paranoid projects that self-reproach into the world whereby it becomes reproach by another person, causing anxiety.¹⁰² Here, too, the sexual pleasure was accompanied by unpleasure. The conceptual pair pleasure-unpleasure always denotes the accrual and discharge of tension. Unpleasure means the damming-up of mental tension and pleasure is experienced when this tension is reduced. In principle individuals seek to avoid unpleasure in favour of pleasure. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud called this the unpleasure principle.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ S. Freud, *Letter 18, SE I*, p.188.

⁹⁹ S. Freud, *Draft E. How Anxiety Originates, SE I*, p.194.

¹⁰⁰ S. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, p.144.

¹⁰¹ Idem, p.154.

¹⁰² S. Freud, *Draft H., Paranoia, SE I*, pp.206-212. In a text on anxiety neurosis (also from 1895) Freud argues that this specific neurosis can be distinguished from other neuroses. Its specific trait is the projection of internal sexual excitations (i.e. not a self-reproach) outwards. These projected excitations are then experienced as a danger causing anxiety. S. Freud, *On the Grounds for Detaching a Particular Syndrome from Neurasthenia under the Description “Anxiety Neurosis”, SE III*, p.112.

¹⁰³ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, SE V*, pp.598-604.

Draft K from January 1896 can initially be seen as a provisional summary. Hysteria, obsessional neurosis and paranoia are the consequence of abnormal processing of mental “affective states”.¹⁰⁴ After all, conflict, self-reproach, “mortification” (in the case of paranoia) and mourning (in the case of melancholia)¹⁰⁵ do not provide for a discharge of affect, but for “permanent damage to the ego”.¹⁰⁶

1.8 Moral judgements

Defence against intolerable ideas is central. Some ideas are repressed, others are not. It appears that in any case they are “judged” within consciousness, but what is meant by judge? Upon what basis do people form a judgement? In May 1895 Freud wrote to Fliess that a book on the capacity to judge by Wilhelm Jerusalem (1854-1923) had caught his attention.¹⁰⁷ He related that the book matched two of his main lines of thinking: “that judging consists in a transference into the motoric sphere, and that internal perception cannot claim to be “evidence””.¹⁰⁸ From these remarks it appears that he was trying to strengthen his line of thinking, especially in relation to philosophy. Within the framework of this study it will be worthwhile to explore this communiqué to Fliess more deeply.

It appears that even during his medical studies Freud was interested in philosophy. He followed lectures by the philosopher Franz Brentano (principally known as Eduard Husserl’s teacher).¹⁰⁹ In 1874, Brentano (1838-1917) had just completed his magnum opus, *Die Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* [Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint]. Freud’s introduction to psychology thus began in a certain sense with philosophy. Freud undoubtedly came into contact with central concepts via contemporary debates. Brentano stood in the middle of these debates. His work dealt with consciousness and the unconscious, idea and will, intentionality of thinking. Getting to know Brentano was the same as becoming acquainted with philosophy and an ethic based on scientific psychology.

¹⁰⁴ S. Freud, *Draft K. The Neuroses of Defence*, SE I, p.220.

¹⁰⁵ In draft G Freud had argued that the primary characteristic of melancholia was “mourning over loss of libido”. S. Freud, *Draft G. Melancholia*, SE I, p.201.

¹⁰⁶ Idem.

¹⁰⁷ W. Jerusalem, *Die Urteilsfunktion. Eine psychologische und erkenntniskritische Untersuchung*, Braumüller, Leipzig, Vienna, 1895. On this subject see F. Geerardyn, *Freud’s Project: On the Roots of Psychoanalysis*, Rebus, London, 1997, pp.224ff, G. Gödde, *Traditionslinien des “Unbewußten”*, pp.176-182.

¹⁰⁸ S. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, p.129.

¹⁰⁹ Freud called Brentano a “damned clever fellow” and a “genius”. For a period he seemed impressed with his philosophy. In this period Ludwig Feuerbach (see chapter 7) was his favourite philosopher. Gay argues that the impression Feuerbach made depended on his criticism on both theology and philosophy, and his robust search for reality instead of systems. Freud was attracted to this, because of his own distaste for grandiose metaphysics. P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.28-31. On Freud and Brentano see J. Heaton, “Brentano and Freud”, in *Sigmund Freud. Critical Assessments, Volume I*, L. Spurling (ed.), Routledge, New York, London, 1989, pp.205-225.

It is precisely in this regard that he had an influence on Freud.

Brentano denied the existence of an unconscious. Every mental act is conscious, always concerned with an object either outside an individual (primary object) or inside (secondary object).¹¹⁰ These objects can be perceived, which in the case of a secondary object means an “inner evident perception”.¹¹¹ This perception is called evident because when, for example, a person hears something he cannot be sure that there actually was a sound, but he can evidently be sure and conscious of the fact that he hears.¹¹² This applies to thinking in general¹¹³: I cannot be sure that what I think of exists, but I am conscious of the fact that my thoughts are always concerned with an object of thought.¹¹⁴

Consciousness and intentionality are key concepts also in Brentano’s ethics. Ethical judgements and acts are always concerned with good (or bad). Good can be differentiated from bad because the correctness or incorrectness of a judgement is evident. Such judgements are not based on blind instinct, but upon deliberate and correct assessment. By correct he means that one judgement or act is evidently better than another. The pursuit of happiness or knowledge, for example, is “by nature” preferable to the pursuit of unhappiness or a mistake.¹¹⁵ With respect to guilt and feeling guilty, we can thus deduce that every sense of guilt in normal people can be traced back here to “one’s own guilt”, because an incorrect decision did not have to be made. The correctness of another judgement or act was, after all, evident. Every moral assessment is in the end a conscious assessment, every incorrect judgement a mistake.

In *Die Urteilsfunktion* [The Function of Judgement], Wilhelm Jerusalem distanced himself unequivocally from Brentano.¹¹⁶ Jerusalem was looking for the origin of the mental act of judgement. His starting point was the “basic elements of mental life”: idea, feeling and will.¹¹⁷ These elements were not necessarily

¹¹⁰ F. Brentano, *Die Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt, Band III, Vom sinnlichen und noetischen Bewusstsein*, Meiner Verlag, Leipzig, 1928, p.37. On this text see E. Fugali, *Die Zeit des Selbst und die Zeit des Seienden. Bewusstsein und inneren Sinn bei Franz Brentano*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg, 2004.

¹¹¹ F. Brentano, *Die Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt, Band III*, p.3, p.50.

¹¹² Idem, pp.33ff.

¹¹³ Brentano is referring to Descartes when he argues that the “cogito” was a general concept covering a variety of mental intentions: “seeing, hearing, doubting, being convinced, feeling pleasure, feeling unpleasure, desiring, detesting, wanting, being angry, etc.”. Idem, pp.8-9.

¹¹⁴ Compare *Innere Wahrnehmung als sekundäres (Mit-)Bewußtsein ist in der deskriptiven Psychologie Brentanos nicht anders gedacht als die einfachste Anerkennung der Existenz eigener psychischer Phänomene*. By the acknowledgment of the existence of a psychic phenomenon is meant that a person has “knowledge” of the “fact” that he is thinking, hearing, judging, etc. C. Stadler, *Der Begriff der Intentionalität bei Brentano und Husserl und seine Bedeutung für die Theoriebildung in der Psychologie*, Verlag Uni-Druck, Munich, 1987, p.116.

¹¹⁵ F. Brentano, *Vom Ursprung sittlicher Erkenntnis. Ein Vortrag*, Meiner Verlag, Leipzig, 1921, pp.18-20 (originally 1889).

¹¹⁶ W. Jerusalem, *Die Urteilsfunktion*, pp.4ff, pp.66ff.

¹¹⁷ Idem, p.19. Compare *So wäre denn aus Vorstellungs-, Gefühls-, und Willenselementen die Urteilsform entstanden, in welcher wir die Vorgänge unserer Umgebung aufzufassen benötigt sind*. Idem, p.95.

conscious. In fact, Jerusalem assumed that the larger part of psychic ideas could exist unconsciously influencing consciousness.¹¹⁸

Jerusalem asked himself which of the basic elements of mental life first develops in man. In that connection he proposed examining the development of children and primitive people, both of which Freud later undertook.¹¹⁹ He suggests that the foundation of every psychic reaction and every judgement of an idea lay in a differentiated emotional life – a differentiation between pleasure and unpleasure. This pleasure-unpleasure mechanism is triggered as an initial mental reaction to basic spatial and physical experiences, external pressures and bodily movements and sensations.¹²⁰ It is from these elements that the world is also subsequently encountered: “we perceive the world according to how we react to it”.¹²¹ A person thus reacts with pleasure or unpleasure to that which he encounters; it is from this reaction that judgements are established. The importance of such a judgement is unambiguous, according to Jerusalem: to protect life.¹²² To judge, based upon feelings of pleasure or unpleasure, is basically to attack (aggression) or to defend, which implies, as Jerusalem writes, a close connection between “the biological”, the origins of psychic life, the mechanism of pleasure and unpleasure, and aggression and defence mechanisms.¹²³

Freud would not have missed this main idea: judgements, including moral judgements, resistance and defence (protecting life), have their origin in basic unconscious physical and mental elements, in bodily sensations and in pleasure and unpleasure.¹²⁴ In other words, here we find a scheme that Freud will uphold throughout his writings: the unconscious is situated between physical urges on the one hand and conscious thought on the other hand. In short, the unconscious is the “missing link” between body and consciousness.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ Idem, p.12. Jerusalem explicitly distances himself from Eduard von Hartmann’s metaphysics of the unconscious. Jerusalem’s idea is that of an unconscious as a hypothesis derived from for example clinical evidence (hypnosis) and theories on the relationship between physical and psychic phenomena.

¹¹⁹ Idem, p.19, pp.92-96.

¹²⁰ Idem, pp.19-20.

¹²¹ *Wir fassen die Welt auf, wie wir auf sie reagieren.* Idem, p.20.

¹²² Idem, p.21.

¹²³ Idem, pp.20-21.

¹²⁴ Interesting is the fact that Jerusalem refers with agreement to Wolfgang Goethe’s *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and his notion that there is a “pleasure to judge”. Idem, pp.88-91. Goethe, as we will see, was hugely admired by Freud. With regard to *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, in 1917 Freud published *A Childhood Recollection in “Dichtung und Wahrheit”*, SE XVII, pp.145-156.

¹²⁵ S. Freud, G. Groddeck, *Georg Groddeck. Sigmund Freud. Briefwechsel*, Limes Verlag, Wiesbaden, Munich, 1985, p.22. In *Project for a Scientific Psychology* the term “psychical apparatus” already indicates the unconscious as situated between body (“apparatus”) and consciousness (“psyche”). Compare also S. Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, SE XXIII, pp.144ff; S. Freud, *Some Elementary Lessons in Psychoanalysis*, SE XXIII, pp.281-286.

1.9 Seduction and self-reproach

As evidenced by the case of the girl with the sense of guilt from *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, the ego represses incompatible ideas, that is, ideas linked with abnormal sexual acts. There is thus a factual basis for a guilty conscience. Based on cases such as these, Freud came to the general standpoint that neuroses can be traced back to a sexual cause, that is to say, a past event.¹²⁶

In 1896 it appeared that Freud had succeeded in developing a comprehensive and sound theory for the aetiology of neuroses. This was known as the seduction theory.¹²⁷ According to his own account, the cause of neuroses is of “surprising simplicity and uniformity”: neurasthenia is caused by immoderate masturbation and ejaculation while anxiety neuroses are caused by sexual abstinence or coitus interruptus.¹²⁸ Further research into the origins of hysteria and obsessional neuroses led to earlier sexual issues; the symptoms indicate a sexual cause. There is a memory of a premature (before the age of ten) experience of sexual relations with actual genital arousal, as a result of sexual abuse.¹²⁹ In hysteria we are dealing with a passive experience. Here we find an important difference with an obsessional neurosis: the premature sexual experience is here paired with “pleasure”; that is to say that the experience was here an act of “sexual aggression against the other sex” (in the case of a boy).¹³⁰ Or it was a question of participation with pleasure (in the case of a girl). Freud added to this that these “experiences of pleasure” were probably made possible by an even earlier passive sexual experience: the presence of hysterical symptoms supported this idea.

We will now turn to the obsessional neuroses, for, as expected, self-reproach plays a leading role here. Obsessional neuroses can be traced back to childhood sexual experiences during which the child experienced pleasure in his or her aggression or participated with enjoyment in the sexual act. Here, too, Freud proceeded on the basis of the assumption that behind this experience of pleasure lay an even earlier “seduction”. What then is the “essence” of the obsessional neurosis: they are “invariably transformed self-reproaches which have re-emerged

¹²⁶ That an anxiety neurosis does not have a hereditary source but is the result of a “moment” (namely the moment in time when the psychological apparatus becomes overloaded) is the core of Freud’s defence against Leopold Löwenfeld. S. Freud, *A Reply to Criticisms of my Paper on Anxiety Neurosis*, *SE III*, pp.123-139.

¹²⁷ The so-called seduction theory is formulated and elaborated upon in three texts from 1896: S. Freud, *Heredity and the Aetiology of the Neuroses*, pp.143-156; S. Freud, *Further Remarks on the Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, *SE II*, pp.162-185; S. Freud, *The Aetiology of Hysteria*, *SE III*, pp.191-221. On these texts see M. Vansina, *Het super-ego*, pp.23ff; T. Geyskens, “Freud’s Letters to Fliess. From Seduction to Sexual Biology, from Psychopathology to a Clinical Anthropology”, in *International Journal for Psychoanalysis* 82 (2001), pp.861-876; T. Geyskens, *Never Remembered. Freud’s Construction of Infantile Sexuality*, Nijmegen, 2002.

¹²⁸ S. Freud, *Heredity and the Aetiology of the Neuroses*, pp.150-151.

¹²⁹ *Idem*, pp.152ff; S. Freud, *Further Remarks on the Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, pp.162-163.

¹³⁰ *Idem*, p.169.

from repression and which always relate to some sexual act that was performed with pleasure in childhood".¹³¹ The processes work as follows. In the period of "childhood immorality" a sexual experience takes place via seduction which subsequently results in repression, or the child commits an act of sexual aggression which later returns as self-reproach.

For Freud, childhood, the period before puberty, is still a period of innocence. A child is initially an asexual being. After all, the conflict with the "demon of sensuality" only begins at puberty.¹³² By childhood immorality he thus in fact meant a period of innocence and ignorance. When it comes to sexual morality, a child is simply not initiated and is inexperienced. In fact, when Freud refers to "immorality" he means amorality. Normally this period ends with physical maturity. When puberty begins self-reproach attaches itself firmly to the memory of the sexual act. In connection with an even earlier experience of passivity it becomes possible to repress the memory of the act, often after a conscious memory. Repression is thus here still a conscious not-wanting-to-know.¹³³ The memory and its linked reproach are replaced by a defensive symptom such as conscientiousness, shame or a distrust of oneself. In the next stage, that of the actual illness, the repressed memories – along with the reproach – return, but not in an invariable form: that which is being repressed blends with that which is repressing it (repressing ideas) and has thus a "compromise" character.¹³⁴ An obsessional idea has the same compelling logic as the resistance to that which has been repressed. Further evidence for this compromise character is that the repressed reproach transforms itself into a unpleasure affect, which subsequently becomes conscious and results in shame or fear. The originally repressed memory content and even the self-reproach are thereby able to become part of the symptom. We may assume that with repressing ideas Freud meant here that which he had earlier designated as the "moral character" or "moral ideas". Although he did not further thematise this here, it is an important idea: so-called "moral being" is here given a compromise character.

In therapy it appears that obsessional neurotics are only able to achieve insight into the cause of their symptoms with difficulty. The reason for this is that conscientiousness (as the certainty that until that point a moral life has been lived)¹³⁵ originates at the first repression of memory and reproach as a defensive symptom. This thus makes it impossible for the self-reproach to be believed. Freud also called self-distrust the first defensive symptom: self-reproach is

¹³¹ Idem.

¹³² S. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, p.33.

¹³³ A late example of repression as a not-wanting-to-know is found in a text from 1898: "hysterical people do not know what they do not want to know". S. Freud, *The Mechanism of Forgetfulness*, *SE III*, p.296.

¹³⁴ S. Freud, *Further Remarks on the Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, p.170.

¹³⁵ Idem, p.174.

then recognized, but compensated for by “healthy” conscientiousness.¹³⁶ An “unhealthy” conscientiousness thus does not provide credence for self-reproach; a “healthy” conscientiousness does provide credence for self-reproach.⁹

In April 1896 Freud expounded his seduction theory to the Viennese Society for Psychiatry and Neurology, run by Krafft-Ebing. Sexual acts from childhood are harmful and traumatic. When sexuality really develops in puberty the earlier (experiential) memories can become unbearable. He observed again that the ego defence is dependent upon “the subject’s total moral and intellectual development”.¹³⁷ He felt that this explained why hysteria was so much less manifest among the lower classes, although one might assume that sexual abuse occurred there with greater frequency. In fact, this was also true for the obsessional neuroses with their reproaches. After all, hysteria and obsessional neuroses differ in aetiology on one point only: whether the infantile scenes were experienced with feelings of aggressive desire or merely passively.¹³⁸ Freud’s lecture was not well received by the Society.¹³⁹

Freud sounded confident in this lecture; he had a watertight story to tell, a theory which was practically complete, and one which virtually polished off heredity – in general overestimated by everyone. It was also a theory which placed sexuality at the centre of attention, and indeed sexuality in particular as experienced and processed by individuals within the bourgeois family. This last point was, as we have seen, not a new theme, but it was certainly scandalous: abuse by fathers, brothers, chambermaids, etc. In *Psychopathia Sexualis* Krafft-Ebbing also proceeded from the premise that sexuality is of psychological importance.¹⁴⁰ Physical changes in puberty have a great effect upon the emotional life, an emotional life which also has an immediate effect upon poetry and religion, for example. To put it another way, the development of sexuality in puberty has a powerful influence on the creation of culture. Krafft-Ebing is clear on this point: in advanced cultures sensuality and sexual instinct are subsumed by morality, anger by love. (That is ultimately only reserved for people with a strong character.) There is no doubt, he claims, that down through history morality has developed to higher (stricter) levels of civilization. Naturally, bourgeois family life – obviously the most strict – is also threatened by, for example, luxury, divorce and by social change. And yes, sexuality in all of its manifestations must be studied, but it is clear that Krafft-Ebing did so from a schema with an ascending moral standard. In his view the bourgeoisie crowned this standard with regard to a morality which curtailed the lower sexual drives.¹⁴¹ Freud now traced all kinds of neuroses back to morally

¹³⁶ Idem, p.184.

¹³⁷ S. Freud, *The Aetiology of Hysteria*, p.211.

¹³⁸ Idem, p.220.

¹³⁹ P. Gay, *Freud*, p.93.

¹⁴⁰ R. von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der conträren Sexualempfindung*, Enke, Stuttgart, 1903, pp.1ff (originally 1886).

¹⁴¹ H. Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature*, pp.56ff.

unacceptable behaviour, precisely in the bourgeois family. It is not strange that Krafft-Ebing viewed Freud's seduction theory as little more than a fairy tale.¹⁴²

Returning to draft K (mentioned above), written to Fliess, at first the manuscript appears to be a summary of his theory at that time. Yet exactly at that time Freud was putting his basic principles up for discussion. Again he discusses the defence(s) against incompatible ideas. Defence functions normally when ideas which were linked to unpleasure do not arouse feelings of unpleasure in the present. Abnormality is the opposite, which chiefly happens with sexual ideas: a memory of a sexual experience from early childhood arouses unpleasure in present adult life. This is possible because puberty has occurred between the defended memories and the new unpleasure, the age at which a person's sexuality comes to maturity.¹⁴³

We have just seen that early sexual experiences are experienced with excitement, either aggressively (desiring) or passively. The question is what exactly is the origin of the unpleasure and thus where does self-reproach as the principle exponent of this unpleasure have its origins. The most obvious answer, Freud tells us, is that an early sexual excitation must go hand in hand with disgust.¹⁴⁴ It is then this experience of disgust which releases unpleasure. The disgusting idea is thus repulsed by the ego and this is the origin of unpleasure. This unpleasure can increase with the onset of puberty: the memory of an earlier sexual experience releases new unpleasure. The defence against an idea plus its affect takes place via morality and shame; these are the forces of repression. Where there is no shame (in a male person), where no morality exists (in the lower classes) and/or where disgust is blunted by conditions of life (such as in the countryside), then repression will not happen; thus no unpleasure remains to make itself felt and no neurosis develops.¹⁴⁵ In these thoughts the origin of unpleasure is linked with the experience of a particular moment of unpleasure (disgust) during sexual stimulation. Morality and shame are to this end givens: they do not emanate from the stimulation itself but are already part of the ego which repulses unbearable ideas thus producing unpleasure. Unpleasure thus appears to be the result of disgust at a premature sexual stimulation and the subsequent repression of the idea by a moral character.

Yet, Freud tells us, the theory does not hold water. After all, experience teaches us that if libido reaches sufficient height disgust is not felt and morality is overridden.¹⁴⁶ Hence, defence and repression cannot be explained only by culturally determined morality. It is not clear how unpleasure is able to come from a sexual experience in either obsessional neuroses or paranoia. Put another way, the seduction theory cannot explain where the self-reproach and/or sense of guilt

¹⁴² P. Gay, *Freud*, p.93.

¹⁴³ S. Freud, *Draft K*, p.221.

¹⁴⁴ *Idem*, pp.221-222.

¹⁴⁵ *Idem*, p.222.

¹⁴⁶ *Idem*.

come from. It cannot be reduced to merely a conflict between inner sensations and an externally imposed morality which gives the moral character form.¹⁴⁷ In other words, sense of guilt calls into question the status and meaning of everyday morality, and calls for a deeper search in the unconscious psychic life in order to dig up its sources.¹⁴⁸

According to Freud, there must be “an independent source for the release of unpleasure” separate from the sexual experience, a source which also makes the experience of disgust possible and empowers morality.¹⁴⁹ For, the more powerful unpleasure and the stronger the self-reproach, the stronger the counter-will as well which represses unpleasure. We are dealing here with the compromise character of human beings as moral characters. The self-reproach which returns in the consciousness is not linked to an idea and thus, if linked to new ideas, can be transformed into anxiety or shame, for example. The power of self-reproach can thus also be applied by the counter-will (conscientiousness) in order to repress unpleasure and self-reproach. Morality (and shame) no longer precede unpleasure, but unpleasure is now the basis of morality’s power. This point reveals the most important effect of Jerusalem’s work: a moral judgement is formed based upon feelings of pleasure and unpleasure. Freud’s critique of his own seduction theory is in part inspired by this. It is also this philosophy which contributes to the abandonment of the normal/healthy v. abnormal/pathological outline. Jerusalem’s philosophy demonstrates that pleasure and unpleasure are generally human, and have no relationship to an inclination towards insanity.

There is an important second argument with which to criticize the seduction theory: the existence of perversion, that is to say, “immorality” (here Freud actually does mean immoral).¹⁵⁰ Perversion cannot be explained by a theory in which the defence against incompatible ideas is central. Perversion also proves that not every infantile sexual experience generates unpleasure in or after puberty and becomes insufferable, despite the fact that perversion is clearly “abnormal”. Perversion reaches back to an experience of sexual excitement which is only strengthened in puberty. Thus perversion cannot be explained by the seduction theory, which in any case hypothesized asexuality.

In draft K Freud worked out his ideas about obsessional neuroses as follows. Obsessional neuroses are composed of repressed self-reproaches which return to consciousness. Initially this reproach is a sense of guilt without content, thus pure affect without idea, ready to be bound to an idea which then results in compulsive behaviour.¹⁵¹ This reproach affect can additionally be transmuted into another emotion, such as fear or shame. To combat this compulsive behaviour, the counter-

¹⁴⁷ Idem.

¹⁴⁸ R. Speziale-Bagliacca, *Guilt*, p.5.

¹⁴⁹ S. Freud, *Draft K*, p.222.

¹⁵⁰ Idem, p.221.

¹⁵¹ Idem, p.224.

symptom of conscientiousness is activated. The consequence is an increase in conscientiousness, for example through rituals. Thus self-reproach leaves behind a trail of defence symptoms: conscientiousness, obsessional behaviour, obsessional conscientiousness.

The biggest problem with the seduction theory is unpleasure. What are its origins? Where it does not come into being (perversion) we must ask how it can be that sometimes unpleasure fails to manifest itself? In the further enquiry into the origins of unpleasure, the study of obsessional neuroses is of great importance. There is, after all, an early pleasurable experience behind obsessional neuroses, while later self-reproach (sense of guilt) determines the real neurosis. Given that self-reproach is *the* expression of unpleasure, the obsessional neurosis appears to be the key to the question of the origin of unpleasure. Freud's first solution to this problem was that the obsessional neurosis also has a passively experienced moment of unpleasure (as in hysterics) at its root. The problem is naturally that he had to find clinical evidence for its existence, in more concrete terms, this meant that there would be even more widespread child abuse by fathers.¹⁵² Should he not find these real seduction experiences, then he would once again be confronted by the question of the origin of unpleasure. It is thus not strange that after abandoning the seduction theory his attention settled on childhood sexuality and experiences of pleasure and the source of "unconscious guilt". In fact, it is from this point that the analysis of obsessional neuroses becomes increasingly central to Freud's writings and the analysis of hysteria takes second place.

The abandonment of the seduction theory in the following period will be a crucial moment. From this point onward it is clear that normality is no longer defined in terms of moral refinement. Morality is not an awareness of correct and incorrect that repulses unbearable ideas and thus also feeds unpleasure, rather morality derives its power from unpleasure. Morality is thus now an effect of repression and not the other way around. For obsessional neuroses this means that self-reproach (sense of guilt) bestows power on a person's "moral character". In this way the question of the origins of self-reproach is crucial to the analysis of the neuroses.

1.10 Stories

In January 1897 it appears that while treating Emma Eckstein (who had been in analysis since 1895) Freud's interest in witchcraft and the devil was awoken.¹⁵³ He became particularly engrossed in Johan Weyer's famed 1563 book *De praestigiis*

¹⁵² "Common sense had intervened to ruin his simplistic scheme; since hysteria was widespread, not even sparing the Freud household, it must follow that "in all cases, the father had to be accused of being perverse, my own not excluded". "Such widespread perversion against children is scarcely probable." P. Gay, *Freud*, p.94.

¹⁵³ S. Freud, *Letters 56, 57, SE I*, pp.242-244. On Emma Eckstein see P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.84-85.

Daemonum, which was reissued as part of a series established by Charcot.¹⁵⁴ Freud was captivated because he thought that historical material would support his seduction theory vis-à-vis hysteria.¹⁵⁵ Was not the medieval theory of possession identical to his theories of a split consciousness? Is it not remarkable that it was in the Middle Ages that seduction by and illicit sexual acts with the devil played such a primary role? Why do the confessions of accused witches obtained under torture bear such an enormous similarity with patient stories, such as that of Emma? *De praestigiis Daemonum* is indeed a work in which Weyer maintains that the confessions of accused witches are not confessions of actual seduction by the devil, but confessions produced under torture.¹⁵⁶ What “really” emerged were the tales, fantasies about seduction and possession.

Stories such as Emma’s and ideas such as Weyer’s were important at the time Freud began to criticise his seduction theory. Stories of abuse in childhood were not based on reality. In the drafts L and M (written in the spring of 1897) he still held to the seduction theory, but his interest in fantasies is clearly noticeable.¹⁵⁷ That spring he felt he was close to discovering “the source of morality”.¹⁵⁸ Yet in draft N (dated May 1897) we find him busy with fragmented thoughts and with questioning his ideas. We can detect the beginnings of new theories, for example when he writes that hostile impulses and death-wishes are a part of neurosis, and that maybe these impulses stem from fantasy.¹⁵⁹ Yet, he ends with an intuition that is reminiscent of *Carmen*: “Civilization exists in progressive renunciation. Contrariwise is the “super-man” (*Übermensch*)”.¹⁶⁰ The background to these thoughts was formed by political circumstances: in April 1897 Karl Lueger, leader of the Christian Socialists and an anti-Semite, was elected mayor of Vienna. In

¹⁵⁴ Freud listed Weyer’s text as one of the ten most important books in the history of science. E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 3*, p.422. On Freud and Weyer see P. Swales, “Freud, Johann Weier, and the Status of Seduction: the role of the witch in the conception of fantasy”, in *Sigmund Freud. Critical Assessments, Volume 1*, pp.331-358; P. Swales, “Freud, Krafft-Ebing, and the Witches: The role of Krafft-Ebing in Freud’s flight into fantasy”, in Idem, pp.359-365; H. Midelfort, “Charcot, Freud and the Demons”, in *Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits. Traditional Belief & Folklore in Early Modern Europe*, K.A. Edwards (ed.), Truman State University Press, Kirksville, 2002, pp.199-215.

¹⁵⁵ S. Freud, *Letter 56*, p.242.

¹⁵⁶ H. Lehmann, O. Ulbricht, “Motive und Argumente von Gegnern der Hexenverfolgung von Weyer bis Spee”, in *Vom Unfug des Hexen-Processes. Gegner der Hexenverfolgungen von Johann Weyer bis Friedrich Spee*, H. Lehmann, O. Ulbricht (eds.), Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1992, pp.1-14; S. Clark, “Glaube und Skepsis in der deutschen Hexenliteratur von Johann Weyer bis Friedrich von Spee”, in idem, pp.15-34.

¹⁵⁷ S. Freud, *Draft L, Draft M, SE I*, pp.248-253. Freud here primarily regards fantasies as both obstruction and gateway to getting at the underlying real seduction.

¹⁵⁸ S. Freud, *Letter 64, SE I*, p.253.

¹⁵⁹ S. Freud, *Draft N, SE I*, pp.254-255.

¹⁶⁰ Idem, p.257.

reaction Freud joined the Jewish B'nai B'rith society.¹⁶¹ At the very moment that “the rabble” gained power, he returned to the notion of culture as suffering and made, in fact, a minor plea for refinement. His remark about the “super-man” was aimed at people such as Lueger, people influenced by, *inter alia*, Nietzsche, and in him they found an anti-liberal advocate.¹⁶²

In September 1897 Freud wrote: “I no longer believe in my neurotica”.¹⁶³ There must have been, for example, an enormous amount of child abuse according to his seduction theory. He realized that truth and fiction are difficult to differentiate and that seduction cannot be proven. Additionally, it appeared that the hypothesized primal seduction was often not retrievable, it was too deeply repressed. Freud was not able to trace his patients’ stories back to an actual experience: they were fantasies, either made up by the patients or forced upon them by himself.¹⁶⁴ He gave his seduction theory up, although he did not give up his suspicion the middle-class fathers. In November of that year Freud returned to his pronouncement that he had found the “origin of morality”. He proceeded from the idea that the source of (sexual) repression was the same as that of morality and shame. Once again this source lay in childhood, not in abuse by another but in a stimulation of the erogenous zones which are able to release pleasure as well as unpleasure.¹⁶⁵ This is the track down which Freud subsequently proceeded.

The seduction stories were probably fantasies, but they may also have been thrust upon his patients by Freud himself. It is in this period that he not only began to doubt his patients’ stories, but was also confronted with his own role in analysis. The Dora case or *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* from 1905 testifies to this.¹⁶⁶ Dora’s (Ida Bauer) stories deal with her sexual desires, the rivalries and animosities and especially the reproaches and self-reproaches. The result was a vivid portrait of a complicated, passionate relationship in a

¹⁶¹ Membership of the B'nai B'rith can be seen as a defensive liberal positioning, a choice for the continuation of integration (assimilation) in Viennese society. The alternative was conversion: Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schönberg, for example, converted to Catholicism and Protestantism respectively. P. Gay, *Freud*, p.140, pp.597-598; A. Meyhöfer, *Eine Wissenschaft des Träumens*, pp.243-252.

¹⁶² P. Gay, *Freud*, p.14, p.598.

¹⁶³ S. Freud, *Letter 69, SE I*, p.259.

¹⁶⁴ “I was at last obliged to recognize that these scenes of seduction had never taken place, and that they were only phantasies which my patients had made up or which I myself had perhaps forced upon them, I was for some time completely at a loss.” S. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, p.34. In a letter to Fliess, Freud writes about this “being at a loss”: it seems that it is again arguable that Krafft-Ebing *cum suis* are right when they argued that present fantasies hark back to a hereditary disposition. S. Freud, *Letter 69*, p.260. In fact this line of thought was later taken up by Jung again when he argued that fantasies hark back to archetypal innate schemes.

¹⁶⁵ S. Freud, *Letter 75, SE I*, pp.269-270.

¹⁶⁶ On the Dora case see P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.246-255; R.T. Lakoff, J.C. Coyne, *Father knows best. The Use and Abuse of Power in Freud's Case of Dora*, Teachers College Press, New York, 1993; P.J. Mahony, *Freud's Dora. A Psychoanalytic, Historical, and Textual Study*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1996.

decent, bourgeois environment.¹⁶⁷ Just as in earlier cases, such as Elisabeth von R., this case dealt with close relations between small groups of people: nuclear and extended families supplemented by some very good friends. When one reads these case histories one notes that Freud was aware of people's moral strengths and principles, and simultaneously of the tense relationships which so often had a sexual dimension, for it was exactly these sexual motives which appeared to clash with moral refinement. Within the complex relations of a small group of people around Dora, reproach and self-reproach played the main role. For example, she reproached her father for handing her over to a family friend (Herr. K), in fact in an unspoken exchange: her father was permitted to have an affair with Frau K. while Herr K. was given Dora.¹⁶⁸ Freud denied neither her father's interests nor his egoistic character and opined that Dora's reproach against her father was "justified".¹⁶⁹ In contrast to this are the moments when he was inclined to believe her father (also a patient and one he valued highly¹⁷⁰) when he reproached his daughter for inventing things.¹⁷¹ All in all, it is clear that Freud was sucked into an atmosphere in which the main questions were "who is justifiably reproaching whom?" and "who's feeling guilty about what?" for the person in question. In this atmosphere he held fast to his theoretical discoveries and wanted to refuse to play the role of arbiter, although he was only somewhat successful at this.¹⁷² When he confronted Dora with his opinion that her reproaches against her father were essentially self-reproaches, Dora left and did not return.¹⁷³ Freud's idea was simple: her justified critique of her father masked self-reproach. He called this transformation of self-reproach into reproach against another projection (see also 4.5). The ultimate example of this mechanism is a child who when accused of lying reacts with, "No, you're the liar!" What is Dora's masked self-reproach? It is nothing other than that she herself is complicit in her situation. She secretly approved of her father's relationship with Frau K. Dora's reproaches against her father also included that he exploited his weak health in his relationships with Frau K. and others. Freud also related this reproach back to Dora: Dora was using her hysterical behaviour to try to influence others. When he confronted her with this mechanism, she ended the treatment.

¹⁶⁷ S. Freud, *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, SE VII, pp.7-122.

¹⁶⁸ Idem, p.34.

¹⁶⁹ Idem.

¹⁷⁰ It was father Bauer, after being successfully treated by Freud, who introduced his daughter to him and insisted that he should treat her and "bring her to reason". Idem, p.18-19, p.26. In a sense, Dora's father is asking for what Charcot had called a "moral treatment": "isolation" from the family in treatment with the aim of restoring normal family life.

¹⁷¹ Idem, p.26.

¹⁷² In the case description it is clear that Freud was not only analysing Dora according to his own methods and ideas, but that he also had to resist a persistent father who wanted Freud to bring Dora to reason, that is, to make clear that she had imagined a relationship between himself and Frau K. Idem, p.109.

¹⁷³ Idem.

For various reasons this case appears to be a dividing line. Only after this case does Freud pay much more attention to his own role in treatment and to the dynamics of transference and counter-transference, which were gradually no longer seen as impediments but as *the* therapeutic remedy. For our purposes here it is more important that this led him to be more careful in his interpretations of self-reproach. After all, he had discovered that his analysis of self-reproaches and sense of guilt had not led directly to their origin. One way or another Dora was attached to her self-reproaches and could not tolerate an analysis of them; she could not face up to them. Freud's analysis of reproaches is not only the key to tracking down deeper motivations, these self-reproaches are also the greatest barrier to surmounting them. The Dora case furnished insight into two crucial elements of therapy: transference/counter-transference and what Freud would later call the negative therapeutic reaction.

1.11 Assessment

Freud developed from brain anatomist to analyst of the human mind. In that process he increasingly distanced himself from accepted nineteenth-century explanatory models of the origins and nature of nervous illnesses, such as hereditary disposition and social influences. He discovered that the human mind has its own dynamic which might explain all kinds of disorders (and "normality"). This dynamic involved cultural and individual morality. The ego also has a moral character. In fact, consciousness consists of moral propositions. Patients have a moral character or moral being. The division Freud discovered between conscious and unconscious is initially caused by moral considerations.

The question naturally is where does that moral character come from? In *Carmen* Freud proceeded, as did his contemporaries, from the idea that morality is determined by the culture in which one finds oneself. This is why liberal, bourgeois culture has a "different psychology" than that of the common folk. We are thus dealing here with an external morality which is absorbed by an individual. This is why Freud is able to speak about childhood innocence and immorality. Sexual morality is only internalized later (during puberty) and only then do the self-reproaches emerge. Yet this idea was criticized. Freud posed two important questions: what is the origin of morality and what is the origin of unpleasure? These two questions are connected, for it is the moral being who defends against unpleasure. He subsequently discovered that their connection was more complex: morality draws strength from unpleasure. The question of the origins of morality and unpleasure (or lack thereof) led him to childhood sexuality. At a time of so-called child asexuality and immorality, there were apparently already processes going on which were fundamental for a moral being. Morality is not only a product of social circumstances or moral and intellectual education (in the bourgeois family). Even more primal are sexual unpleasure and pleasure. Morality is certainly coloured by

culture, but derives its power from mental factors. Freud's interest in sense of guilt was determined by this. It formed a decisive link between early developments in the dynamics of pleasure and unpleasure and the realization of a moral character capable of repression. As such, in its origin and development it should be explained.

Chapter 2

Dark traces

2.1 Introduction

In November 1896 Freud's father had died. It affected him deeply, and he wrote to Fliess of an uprooted feeling.¹ The death of his father led to a certain degree of self-analysis. Only a few weeks after abandoning his belief in neurotics in September 1897, he announced that he had begun a self-analysis.² This was to be the method by which he sought to clarify his intellectual thoughts. Later, Freud wrote in the foreword to the second edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1908) that he had only recently realized that the book was at least partly the product of his reaction to the death of his father.³

According to the seduction theory, fathers were all possible incest committers. Given that neuroses were quite common, the natural conclusion is that there must indeed be a great many defective fathers. Even Freud's own father could not remain completely beyond suspicion. Then, however, he recognized the failings of the seduction theory and developed an interest in child sexuality. No longer were the parental (incestuous) desires central, but those of the children. In the spring of 1897 he sent Fliess draft N, in which he made clear that he saw the hostile impulses toward parents as an integral part of neurosis.⁴ He now thought that sons harboured a death wish against their fathers and daughters against their mothers. These impulses were generally repressed, owing to compassion for ill or dying parents, for example. For that matter he also noted that the seeds of his own self-reproaches lay in his childhood jealousy of his infant brother Julius, who only lived for a few months.⁵

This theme of son versus father quickly manifests itself again in a letter to Fliess. That autumn Freud noted that his self-analysis had confirmed, *inter alia*, that sons desire their mothers and are jealous of their fathers.⁶ For Freud this is not a pathological phenomenon but part of early childhood. It was in this connection that he first mentioned Oedipus, the main character in Sophocles' tragedy.

¹ S. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, p.202.

² Idem, p.268. Whatever we may call it, Freud in the late 1890s subjected himself to a thorough self-scrutiny, an elaborate, penetrating, and unceasing census of his fragmentary memories, his concealed wishes and emotions. P. Gay, *Freud*, p.97. This self-analysis was not something completely new in his life. As early as the 1880s Freud kept a dream diary, and his letters to Martha Bernays also reveal some self-analysis. E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. I, pp.351-352.

³ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE IV, p.xxvi.

⁴ S. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, p.250.

⁵ Idem, p.268.

⁶ Idem, p.272.

Research into the origins of morality and unpleasure led Freud away from neurotic patients: he no longer trusted their stories. That is to say, he no longer knew whether they were fantasies or might now and again be actual childhood experiences. He found self-analysis more trustworthy, despite it being more complex and painful personally. His self-analysis largely analysed dreams⁷ and associations. For confirmation of his findings he turned to a mixture of clinical experiences, literary sources and philosophical ideas.

His self-analysis also meant abandoning the “pathological versus normal” scheme. Neurotics form recurring memories from pathological complaints and symptoms. When he began his self-analysis he was also concerned with the recurrence of memories, but now their analysis served to expose general human psychic structures.

2.2 *Your guilt isn't the same as mine*

Freud himself knew exactly when self-analysis had produced its first major results – in a dream he had on 24 July 1895.⁸ Freud was receiving guests, including a certain Irma, in a large hall. He took her aside in order to answer a letter she had sent him. He reproached her for not having accepted his “solution” and said to her, “If you still get pains, it’s really only your fault”. Irma then made it clear that she was still in a lot of pain and Freud subsequently examined her. He discovered spots in her mouth and called upon one of the other guests for assistance. This Dr M. confirmed an infection, one which Freud knew he had not caused but which he suspected of having been caused by an injection with an improperly sterilized needle by a friend, Otto.

Freud’s own analysis of this dream is extensively reported in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.⁹ The core of the dream is clear: (self-)reproaches and wishes. His ultimate conclusion was that the dream was a wish fulfilment, namely not to be the cause of someone else’s pain and ailments.¹⁰ This also makes clear what he understood by wish: an attempt to reduce unpleasure and (thereby) experience pleasure.¹¹

⁷ Freud’s interest in dreams has deep roots, deeper than his dreambook of the 1880s. His identification with the biblical dreamer Joseph (S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE V, p.484) indicates an influence from early childhood of his father reading the bible. H. Stroeken, *Dromen. Brein en betekenis*, Uitgeverij Boom, Amsterdam, 2005, p.72.

⁸ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE IV, pp.106-107. On this dream see D. Anzieu, *Freud’s Self-Analysis*, Hogarth Press, London, 1986, pp.135-155; A. Meyrhofer, *Eine Wissenschaft des Träumens*, pp.141-149.

⁹ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE IV, pp.107-121.

¹⁰ Idem, pp.118-119. “This group of thoughts seemed to have put itself at my disposal, so that I could produce evidence of how highly conscious I was.” Idem, p.120.

¹¹ Idem, SE V, p.598.

The central theme of reproach and guilt is also connected to various other feelings. The most important of these are irritation, revenge and fear. Irritation precedes reproach: in his dream he is irritated by the fact that Irma will not listen to his solution to her problem. His reproach of her directly follows this irritation. Revenge is also expressed in the dream. Freud sees the reproach that not he, but Otto was evidently responsible for the infection as revenge towards “Otto”. He avenges himself also upon “Irma”: a patient who is not faithfully obedient suffers in the dream from her ailments and is “subjected” to medical investigation. She cannot escape the truth. This is also revenge. Finally, he himself harbours feelings of revenge against Dr M: he is the one with the physical disability (he limps) and his diagnosis of the ailment is incorrect. In the dream Freud thus deals with the people who could reproach him. Finally, fear plays a role in the dream. He is intensely frightened when Irma begins to speak about her complaints. This fear is also related to reproach. There is equally the fear that he himself is responsible for her complaints.

There is an additional element: distrust. We must not forget that Freud saw himself at this time as monomaniacal, someone abandoned by his colleagues who had to forge new paths largely on his own. In the dream the avoidance of guilt by reproach is also a way to express distance vis-à-vis colleagues. This is a “just” (wish-fulfilling) distance, for their judgment and methods cannot be trusted. Others are responsible for Irma’s persistent maladies. In short, blaming others serves here to support the ego. On the other hand, this distrust reflects back upon himself. After all, the dream shows that contact with patients made a much deeper impression upon him than he had thought and very probably more than he liked.

This was how Freud’s analysis of this dream linked guilt feelings with other feelings. He was thus investigating sense of guilt. The question, however, is the same as that posed at the end of the previous chapter: where do these feelings come from?

It was the death of Freud’s own father which permitted him to pursue this question more deeply. He wrote to Fliess about a dream he had had the night after the funeral: a placard in a barber’s shop read “you are requested to close the eyes”.¹² He recognized the barber’s shop; he had had to wait there before the funeral and almost arrived too late. His family were rather displeased. In addition, he had insisted on an austere funeral in accordance with his father’s wishes. The sentence on the placard thus also meant that one must fulfil one’s duty to the dead – and this was a double meaning at that. The first meaning had to do with closing the eyes of a dead person, a “duty” with respect to the dead. The second meaning had to do with “apology”, a reference to his family’s hoped-for forbearance.¹³ Freud saw this dream as an attempt to escape self-reproach: he fulfilled his duty in both regards.

¹² S. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, p.202. See also D. Anzieu, *Freud’s Self-Analysis*, p.169-174.

¹³ S. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, p.202.

The Irma dream evidenced his own feelings of guilt. The dream about his dead father showed him the link between his feelings of guilt and his relationship with his father.¹⁴ This is one of a series of dreams in which family relations and feelings of guilt are explicitly or implicitly present. In this vein, Freud wrote briefly to Fliess about a dream about “Hella” and a dream in which he ran naked up a staircase.¹⁵ It was crystal clear to him that his dream about Hella was actually a dream about his daughter Mathilde. He noted that this dream expressed the wish to designate the father as the cause of a neurosis. This dream thus appears to confirm the seduction theory. This was not true of the second dream. In that dream he was running naked up a staircase, was suddenly followed by a woman, which frightened him and caused him to freeze in his tracks. This dream was about the difficulty of recognizing his own incestuous desires, although he did have them. (Freezing in his tracks meant that he could no longer continue to run up the stairs.) But are these desires for his daughter? This same dream is also described in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, but in another version.¹⁶ In this version Freud is running “incompletely dressed” up the staircase but coming the other way is an elderly housemaid. Then, full of shame, he stops on the steps. He is running here into a sexual encounter and is ashamed. This version is no longer about someone running away from incestuous desires, but on the contrary running towards them. While in the first version we had a woman (daughter, wife, mother, maid), in the second we find an older person (housemaid, mother). The first version of the dream could still mean that the father wanted to seduce his daughter, but in the second version a new (inverted) trail is discovered: the dream has to do with the (child’s) desire for a parent figure.

Via these and other analyses of his own and his patients’ dreams, Freud returned repeatedly to these themes: hostility towards the father and “tender feelings” for the mother. In the earliest stage of his self-analysis he was primarily interested in the analysis of unconscious sense of guilt which was expressed in dreams and which also appears in veiled form in these same dreams. These are stories of guilt feelings which led him to his final definition of a dream: a dream is a (veiled) fulfilment of an (unconscious, repressed) wish.¹⁷ Dream analysis also demonstrates that the deepest motives for desire are found in early childhood. It is there that all themes of hostility towards the father and love for the mother are in play. It was in this way, that is, via dream analysis, that Freud collected the material with which he ultimately constructed the Oedipus complex.

¹⁴ “The Irma dream made him aware of his guilt feelings, but did not explain them to him. The “Close the eyes” dream made him realise that those feelings involved his father. His new awareness had a liberating effect. For about six months after that, he stopped complaining of fatigue, moments of depression, or an intellectual block.” D. Anzieu, *Freud’s Self-Analysis*, p.175.

¹⁵ S. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, p.249.

¹⁶ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, SE IV*, pp.238-240.

¹⁷ Idem, pp.121ff, Idem, *SE V*, p.674.

Are all dreams wish fulfilments? At first sight anxiety dreams appear to contradict this. These dreams do not appear to have anything to do with wish fulfilments, but exactly the opposite. Analysis of anxiety dreams is also self-analysis. Thus Freud describes another remarkable mother dream in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.¹⁸ “It is dozens of years since I myself had a true anxiety dream”, begins Freud, “but I remember one from my seventh or eighth year”. It is a dream in which he sees his “beloved mother” with peaceful sleeping expression carried into the room by people with birds’ beaks. Freud remembers awaking in fear and panic. At first sight the dream is about a fear of the death of the mother, and when his mother is called to it appears she is not dead. In this interpretation the dream is not a wish fulfilment, but waking up from the nightmare to discover the worst has not happened is a relief. Hence, the dream is a relief from anxiety, but anxiety for what exactly? For Freud it is also clear that the dream has a sexual meaning. A closer interpretation of the dream shows a link between the birds’ beaks and the German verb *vögeln*, meaning “to copulate”. Anxiety is the reaction to this: anxiety as a consequence of an “obscure” sexual desire.

Anzieu’s analysis of Freud’s dreams demonstrates a clear link with guilt feelings.¹⁹ Anzieu interprets Freud’s introduction (and specifically the outwardly superfluous remark that it had been years since his last anxiety dream) to the dream about Irma as an exculpation: “I am innocent” – I haven’t had cause to have a nightmare in a long time – I haven’t had an incestuous dream in a long time. “No, I am not guilty”.²⁰ Even more important than this, however, is Freud’s brief remark regarding the link between anxiety and wish.²¹ One of the earliest experiences is wishing. It subsequently releases unpleasure – initially in the form of a self-reproach. Both memory and reproach are repressed from consciousness where they are replaced by the development of a counter-symptom (consciousness). When the repressed feeling returns so do the feelings of self-reproach, but primarily as hollow sense of guilt. This sense of guilt then links up with other ideas. As affect, reproach can transform into other affects, such as anxiety or shame. Anxiety is thus an effect of self-reproach which has returned from the unconscious to consciousness. We return now to the girl with her sense of guilt from the previous chapter. That sense of guilt was a reaction to an injustice which was experienced with desire. In the case of the girl this was masturbation. And in Freud’s case? According to Anzieu, also masturbation in part: the eight-year-old Freud had certainly had a particularly difficult time observing the prohibition against masturbation (seen against the background of the Victorian period). Anxiety first links to the fear of punishment as a consequence of violating that prohibition. Yet at a deeper level anxiety stems from violation of the prohibition against incest and the fear of being

¹⁸ Idem, pp.583-584.

¹⁹ D. Anzieu, *Freud’s Self-Analysis*, pp.294-309.

²⁰ Idem, p.296.

²¹ Idem, pp.306ff.

punished by one's father. A crucial role is thus created for an unconscious sense of guilt. With respect to both the incestuous desires and the masturbation, feelings of desire stimulated the sense of guilt. The difference is that the incestuous desires lie more deeply and are more fundamental to the unconscious. Thus we see here in the self-analysis of this anxiety dream that he has discovered a deeper layer. In 1895 he had declared himself still satisfied with regarding masturbation as a trauma. Now he was digging deeper.

Anxiety dreams demonstrate that a wish can be repressed with all one's strength without the person being aware of it. For Freud repression no longer now takes place proceeding from consciousness. Repression is no longer a conscious "not wanting to know". The conflict is partially relocated to the preconscious, a level between the unconscious and consciousness.²² The preconscious is a kind of storage area for forgotten but not repressed ideas and desires, and those desires and unpleasures which have bubbled up from the unconscious. It is thus the place where the unconscious collides with consciousness. This preconscious has the character of an intermediary and a filter, a stage in which unconscious desires are transferred and halted.²³ In his earliest psychoanalytic work defence was central. The idea then was that consciousness defends against and represses undesirable ideas and that a psychic group forms around these repressed ideas. Freud thus reasoned from consciousness to an unconscious. In his self-analysis and in *The Interpretation of Dreams* he now treads the path in the other direction and is faced with the problem that the unconscious does not have direct, but rather mediated access to consciousness. It is this train of thought which gives birth to the preconscious.²⁴

The Interpretation of Dreams ends with an explanation of the relationship between unconscious, preconscious and consciousness as well as the vicissitudes of desire, wish and excitation.²⁵ Freud wrote that he developed his theories on dreams and the unconscious on his own account.²⁶ In order to test them Freud sought affiliation with philosophy – and not with physiology²⁷ – this time not with Jerusalem, but Theodor Lipps.²⁸ In *Der Begriff des Unbewußten in der Psychologie* [The Concept of the Unconscious in Psychology], 1896, and other works he defended the idea

²² S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE V, pp.593-594.

²³ For example idem, pp.541-542.

²⁴ See also P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.128-129.

²⁵ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE V, pp.610ff.

²⁶ Idem, p.611.

²⁷ Interestingly, this turn to philosophy instead of physiology can also be noticed in some reflections on Fechner in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Describing the "scene of action of dreams" Freud presents the idea of a "psychical locality" which should (explicitly) not be regarded "in any anatomical fashion" though it is located in the "mental apparatus". Idem, p.536.

²⁸ "I have set myself the task of building a bridge between my germinating metapsychology and that contained in the literature and have therefore immersed myself in the study of Lipps, who I suspect has the clearest mind among present-day philosophical writers." S. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, p.286.

that every consciousness is based upon an “unconscious preliminary stage”.²⁹ He called that unconscious “real ego” and Freud now extended this to call the unconscious a “true psychological reality”.³⁰ Differing from Lipps is the subdivision of the unconscious into an actual unconscious and a preconscious. This final chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams* is thus a confrontation with philosophy and ultimately with morality. After the primacy and functioning of the unconscious was comprehensively treated, he closed with the observation that the morally offensive character of the dream should not lead to a (self-)accusation by the dreamer. After all, we are dealing here with desires proceeding from psychic and not material reality. We are dealing with fantasies, not offences.³¹ Dreams are “not my fault.”

Thus *The Interpretation of Dreams* ends with a theme which played a role in Freud’s self-analysis from the beginning: self-reproach. It is primarily via an analysis of his own guilt feelings that Freud eventually got on the trail of general human unconscious processes: the theme of the hostility toward the father and desire for the mother, and “their fate”.³²

2.3 *The dead kill*

The many comments to Fliess regarding the ups and downs of his self-analysis indicate that Freud was completely caught up in it between 1897 and 1898. Other interests only appear sporadically in the correspondence. Freud’s enthusiasm for a book by Rudolf Kleinpaul (1845-1918) entitled *Die Lebendigen und die Toten in Volksglauben, Religion und Sage* [The Living and the Dead in Folk Belief, Religion and Legend], 1898, is thus striking. After studying this book he discovered the existence of “endopsychic myths”.³³ By this is meant that all kinds of ideas, such as those which appear in the various myths and sagas of various peoples and periods, stem from the same desires. Concepts regarding immortality, revenge and the hereafter should thus originally stem from unconscious ideas. In other words, all kinds of “thought-illusions” are “projected” outwards in the future or hereafter.

This book by Kleinpaul is principally about folk belief, religion and legends of the dead and death.³⁴ His point of departure is unambiguous: the belief in spirits or souls which one finds in many forms of belief can generally be traced back to “images of the survivors”. Spirits are thus not beings from the other side, but images of the deceased which “live on in memory, which occupy the fantasy and

²⁹ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE V, pp.611-613; G. Gödde, *Traditionslinien des “Unbewußten”*, pp.182ff.

³⁰ Idem, p.185.

³¹ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE V, p.620.

³² P. Gay, *Freud*, p.129.

³³ S. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, p.286.

³⁴ R. Kleinpaul, *Die Lebendigen und die Toten in Volksglauben, Religion und Sage*, Göschen’sche Verlagshandlung, Leipzig, 1898.

appear to those left behind in dreams and in the imagination".³⁵ These thoughts do not mean that many folk beliefs must be dispensed with as foolishness. "In a certain sense the people are right to believe in spirits, indeed they must".³⁶ What Kleinpaul is interested in is not the equation of an illusion with nonsense and falseness. His concerns lie elsewhere. He is interested in the phenomenon that deceased loved ones return as malignant beings. Thus the living focus on doing everything possible to create distance between themselves and the dead (burying the body, the belief in the hereafter in heaven, the island of the dead separated from the world of the living by a river). In the end the reason is a desire to keep the dead far away, for they are malevolent. If they return they do so as an apparition or demon. In order to lend support to his thesis, Kleinpaul drew on a selection of sources, in part the same as those Freud used: Greek myths, Shakespeare, Goethe.

A central idea is that "the dead kill"³⁷ for "the dead draw the living to them".³⁸ Kleinpaul puts this idea forward based on the experiential fact that couples in love often die quickly after one another. By way of example he cites the devil which comes for Faust and Brutus who is visited by the ghost of Julius Caesar just before his own death.³⁹ Freud's interest in Kleinpaul's book comes at a noteworthy moment, namely in the period of his self-analysis and the working through of the death of his father. At that time, as evidenced in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he regularly identified himself with Goethe's Faust (or Mephistopheles) and also with Brutus.⁴⁰

Freud saw the idea that the dead can kill as the culmination of Kleinpaul's book. He said as much in *Totem and Taboo* which, after his initial enthusiasm to Fliess, is the first time he discussed the work again.⁴¹ Freud endorsed this idea, subsequently linked it to compulsive (self-)reproach and from there to the origins of morality and religion. We shall return in a later chapter to *Totem and Taboo*, but it is worthwhile examining this passage further. Indeed, we see here how the self-analysis, in combination with his interest in Kleinpaul's work, was fundamentally reworked in this later publication. He adopted Kleinpaul's idea and linked it with clinical experiences. "When a wife has lost her husband or a daughter her mother, it not unfrequently happens that the survivor is overwhelmed

³⁵ Idem, foreword iii.

³⁶ Idem, iv.

³⁷ *Die Toten töten; jeder Tote streckt gleichsam eine Hand zum Grabe heraus, die er den Lebenden reicht und mit der er sie zu sich ins Grab hinunterzieht.* Idem. pp.107-108.

³⁸ Idem, p.106.

³⁹ Idem, pp.108-109.

⁴⁰ For example S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, SE IV*, p.142; *SE V*, p.424, p.483, We may add here Don Juan who is also mentioned by Kleinpaul as being visited by a ghost who foretells his death. Mozart's Don Giovanni was one of Freud's favourite operas. P. Gay, *Freud*, p.168.

⁴¹ S. Freud. *Totem and Taboo. Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics, SE XIII*, pp.58-59.

by tormenting doubts”, that is, “obsessional self-reproaches”, he put forward.⁴² (It is naturally of note that he failed to mention the variant of this in the scenario in which a son loses his father.) These self-reproaches occur whether the death of a loved one has been brought about by carelessness and neglect or not. Freud believed that this compulsion to self-reproach is understandable and in a certain sense justified, not because the loved one did indeed die of negligence, but because there is something within us, an unconscious “wish”, which is not dissatisfied with death.⁴³ A similarly hidden hostility can be seen, for example, in cases of intense emotional fixation.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* the cries of a malevolent spirit play a role in Freud’s “non-vixit” dream which dates from October 1898 – after he had read Kleinpaul.⁴⁴ In the first part of this dream he is on his way to Brücke’s laboratory, quietly entered (the deceased) Professor Fleischl’s room when Fleischl himself entered the room and sat down at his table. In the second part of the dream Freud’s friend Fl. (Fliess) had come to Vienna. It was July. Freud met him on the street while the latter was conversing with a deceased friend P. The trio then sat at a table. Fl. told them about the death of his sister. P. did not understand him at which point Fl. turned to Freud and asked how much he had told P. about him. Freud then told Fl. that P. was no longer alive (and thus could not understand anything). He then said, noting the error immediately, “Non vixit” (“he did not live”) instead of “Non vivit” (“he is not alive”). He then gave P. a piercing look which caused him to turn pale, then blue and then slowly to dissolve into nothingness. This pleases him and he now understands that Fleischl, too, was only a ghost. He is then certain that a person only exists as long as another so desires and that one could get rid of him with a wish.⁴⁵

Freud’s first concern is the slip “Non vixit” when he meant to say “Non vivit”. He views the moment when he made P. vanish by looking at him as central to the dream. Via the association with a monument for Emperor Joseph II, Freud was able to explain the slip and also discover P.’s first name (Josef [Breuer?]⁴⁶). The dream’s closing observations, the month of July and the Emperor, also yield a connection: Freud noted that in the dream he was identifying himself with Brutus who had murdered his father Julius Caesar. The association with Julius Caesar eventually made a link possible to Freud’s younger brother Julius, who died young.⁴⁷ In short, this dream gives voice to all kinds of hostile desires against loved ones (his father,

⁴² Idem, p.60.

⁴³ Idem.

⁴⁴ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, SE V*, pp.421ff, pp.480ff. On this dream see also D. Anzieu, *Freud’s Self-Analysis*, pp.379-388; P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.116-117.

⁴⁵ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, SE V*, p.421.

⁴⁶ Freud makes an association with Josef Paneth, his successor in Brücke’s laboratory. Anzieu argues that this Josef is likely to be Breuer. D. Anzieu, *Freud’s Self-Analysis*, p.382.

⁴⁷ Idem, p.384.

his teacher Breuer, his friend Fliess, his brother Julius). The extra dimension in this dream is the return of the dead as ghosts. Freud identified with Brutus, Julius Caesar's foster son, who had murdered his father, but also the man who just before a battle saw the ghost of his dead father and heard foretold that he would soon die. The ghost is thus a remnant of all loved ones one wishes dead; the ghost is the demon who comes to exact revenge on whoever is responsible for his death. We see here the combination of hostile feelings on the one hand and guilt feelings on the other.

2.4 *"Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all"*

In September 1897 Freud gave up his belief in neurotics. He no longer believed in seduction as the cause of mental problems. In mid-October Oedipus appears in his work for the first time.⁴⁸ The transition in the Freud-Fliess correspondence was formed by remarks regarding dreams and childhood memories which primarily concerned Freud's mother and his jealousy of his little brother Julius. Thus there is a dream in which he is persuaded to steal money.⁴⁹ Closer analysis (and a conversation with his mother) revealed that Freud had not been led astray, but that the housemaid had been a thief. He had not been led astray, but he had identified with her ("I = she").⁵⁰ Another memory had to do with a thought which had recurred for twenty-nine years about a scene in which his mother "was nowhere to be found" and, at the request of his older brother Phillip, he eventually went to look for her in a wardrobe. At that moment his mother returned and reproached his brother for locking little Sigmund up in the wardrobe. In short, this recurring memory is about desire for his mother. And that is why Freud wrote: "I have found, in my own case too, (the phenomenon of) being in love with my mother and jealous of my father, and I now consider it a universal event in early childhood".⁵¹ It was in connection with this thought that he referred to Oedipus. Everyone can, in a certain sense, understand this myth: "everyone in the audience was once a budding Oedipus in fantasy and each recoils in horror from the dream fulfilment here transplanted into reality",⁵² but it is indeed a fantasy repressed with all one's might. This first version of the Oedipus complex is certainly the result of self-analysis after the death of his father, but has its origin in his desire for his mother.

⁴⁸ S. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, p.272.

⁴⁹ Idem, p.269.

⁵⁰ Idem, p.271.

⁵¹ Idem, p.272.

⁵² Idem.

Yet Freud did not delve more deeply into the Oedipus myth at this juncture. His interest shifted to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.⁵³ He already referred to this play in the letter in which he renounced his belief in neurotics.⁵⁴ Now he was not interested here in the question as to why Hamlet hesitated so long before murdering his uncle, thus revenging his father. He swore to the ghost of his father to take revenge for his murder, but doubts remained. It is Hamlet's conscience which stands in his way, a conscience which in no way hinders him from killing other people. Hamlet unconsciously recognizes himself in his uncle who killed his father out of love for his mother. His uncle did what he most deeply longed to do. Subsequently Hamlet has the opportunity (via revenge) to definitively take his father's place. The ghost seduces him into carrying out his deepest desires. Yet it is exactly these desires which have been repressed with all his might as intolerable. This explains his hesitation: "thus conscience doth make cowards of us all".⁵⁵ Freud concludes, "his conscience is his unconscious sense of guilt", his unconscious consciousness of guilt.⁵⁶ That unconscious sense of guilt colours this tragedy: it stands in the way of a normal sexual relationship with Ophelia and eventually leads Hamlet to his fate (a "punishment" compelled) comparable to his father's.

"His conscience is his unconscious sense of guilt." The big difference, Freud opined, between the Oedipus myth and the Hamlet tragedy is that Hamlet continued to repress what Oedipus, albeit unwittingly, realized (killing the father and possessing the mother). Hamlet is not conscious of his guilt feelings, although he is of his conscience. That the conscience "is" an unconscious sense of guilt cannot also be read as "is the same as". What Freud is driving at is that at the base of conscience lies an unconscious sense of guilt.

2.5 *The dark trace of an old guilt*

In the first part of *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud discusses all kinds of extant theories regarding dreams including those which deal with moral and immoral feelings. He differentiates two traditions.⁵⁷ One tradition states that within a dream the conscience is, as it were, "in sleep" and consequently no censorship of dream content takes place.⁵⁸ There is another tradition which asserts that the

⁵³ Idem, pp.272-273. Compare also S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, SE IV*, pp.264-266, and also S. Freud, *Psychopathic Characters on the Stage, SE VII*, pp.309-310. In this short paper on "the stage" Freud associates opera (Carmen) as the depiction of the (conscious) tragic struggle between "love and duty" with Hamlet's unconscious conflicts. Idem, p.308.

⁵⁴ S. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, p.265.

⁵⁵ W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, act 3, scene 1, in *The Complete works of William Shakespeare*, Spring Books, London, 1976, p.960.

⁵⁶ S. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, p.273.

⁵⁷ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, SE IV*, pp.66ff.

⁵⁸ Idem, p.66.

conscience continues to function normally while dreaming, but that the dreamer is challenged by sins or vices. Freud mentions here in particular the 1875 work by F.W. Hildebrandt, *Das Traumleben und seine Verwerthung* [Dreams and their Interpretation].⁵⁹ He regularly and approvingly refers to this work, but exactly at the point that he begins to discuss morality he differs from him. Calling upon Kant's categorical imperative, Hildebrandt believes that the most fundamental aspect of being human is morality: the more impure the life, the more impure the dream.⁶⁰ In his *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* [Critique on Practical Reason], 1788, Kant saw moral law as essential for humanity and as the most important motive to which human will must be attuned. Everything that Kant refers to as "pathological" motives must be subjected to this rational law. He thus saw any eventual self-reproach as the consequence of knowingly straying from this law.⁶¹ For Hildebrandt, an immoral dream is an unwished for dream, for it is in conflict with morality. Just as in Kant, free will is central here: an individual is responsible for the ideas in his dreams. That means "that a sin committed in a dream bears with it at least an obscure minimum of guilt".⁶² Freud did not agree with this conceptualization of free will, guilt and responsibility, but he thought highly of Hildebrandt's book. After all, he also saw dreams as wish fulfilments and the key to plumbing the depths of the human soul. The problem is firstly that both traditions explain away the immoral character of dreams too easily, that is, as one's own guilt and responsibility owing to an inadequate moral standard. For Freud dreams were not about unwanted (undesired) ideas, but about repression.⁶³ He thus argued for recognition of an autonomous mental cause for immorality in dreams. It is the quest for this source which led him to the Oedipus complex.

His discussion of the Oedipus complex in *The Interpretation of Dreams* takes place in the chapter on dream material and its sources. In that chapter he first deals with recent events that provide the material for dreams.⁶⁴ He then deals with childhood memories which return in dreams.⁶⁵ He subsequently mentions the somatic sources of dreams.⁶⁶ Finally there is a category he calls "typical dreams".⁶⁷

⁵⁹ F.W. Hildebrandt, *Der Traum und seine Verwerthung für's Leben. Eine psychologische Studie*, Gebrüder Senf, Leipzig, 1881, pp.43-60. On Hildebrandt's book Freud writes: "of all the contributions to the study of dreams which I have come across, it is the most perfect in form and the richest in ideas." S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE IV, p.67.

⁶⁰ Idem.

⁶¹ I. Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, Reclam, Stuttgart, 1992, part I, chapter 3. Rieff has rightfully argued that Freud must be regarded an anti-Kantian. That is to say, in Kant's thought the will is motivated by the Law, whereas, in short, in Freud's view morality (Law) is motivated by the will (which is defined in terms of drives, need, etcetera). Ph. Rieff, *The Mind of the Moralist*, p.54.

⁶² S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE IV, p.70.

⁶³ Idem, p.72.

⁶⁴ Idem, pp.165-188.

⁶⁵ Idem, pp.189-219.

⁶⁶ Idem, pp.220-240.

⁶⁷ Idem, pp.241-276.

Typical dreams are those which for everyone have the same source and which for everyone have the same meaning.⁶⁸ Among these are a trio of recurring themes in dreams. The first are dreams in which shame or nakedness is central.⁶⁹ The second are dreams about the death of a loved one.⁷⁰ It is this section which concerns us. The third group are the so-called “ordeal dreams”, generally adolescent dreams about exams and relationships with teachers.⁷¹

Mothers are central to the first group; fathers quickly become important in the second. Freud discusses dreams about the death of loved ones in which the dreamer experiences profound pain over this death. This painful affect emerges from the wish that the person should die. Thus they are not dealing with an actual wish, but with a resurfacing childhood memory.

Freud now felt obliged to sketch an image of a young child. This description is at odds with his image of the child in his earlier seduction theory in which children were unspoiled and innocent creatures. They were amoral creatures, ignorant of good and evil, but subsequently harshly initiated by the perfidy of others. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* too, children continue to be amoral creatures. This much is clear: “children are completely egoistic”, although one cannot hold them responsible for being so.⁷² They ruthlessly strive to satisfy their own needs and do so in murderous competition with siblings. Later in childhood there are also “altruistic impulses and morality” awakening.⁷³ Following Meynert, Freud wrote: a “secondary ego” develops which overlays and inhibits the “primary ego”.⁷⁴ This primary ego becomes visible in the malicious character of hysterics. With obsessional neurotics, however, it is the secondary ego (“super-morality”) which is excessively strong in its repression of the primary ego.⁷⁵ What is clear thus far is that this primary ego is amoral while the secondary ego in fact corresponds with moral consciousness.

This differentiation between the primary and secondary ego is thus borrowed from Theodor Meynert (1833-1892) who wrote about it in *Gehirn und Gesittung* [The Brain and Civilized Behaviour], 1889. In this presentation Meynert developed a theory of the development of morality from a Darwinistic rationale. The point of departure is Darwin’s struggle for survival. From this principle it follows that every living being is focused on life and survival. Civilization is actually nothing more than the degree to which people have succeeded in pursuing this goal (life) not only for themselves, but also for others. The degree to which the struggle

⁶⁸ Idem, p.241.

⁶⁹ Idem, pp.242-248.

⁷⁰ Idem, pp.248-271. The dreams about the death of loved ones cover the larger part of the elaborations on typical dreams.

⁷¹ Idem, pp.273-276.

⁷² Idem, p.250.

⁷³ Idem.

⁷⁴ Idem.

⁷⁵ Idem, p.251.

for survival is checked is the degree of civilized behaviour.⁷⁶ This is the point of departure and what follows is a long journey from the lowest to the higher animals (bees and ants, for they are able to express consciousness and form a polity⁷⁷) in order to finally reach the highest level achievable: moral and religious civilized man. From the perspective of the struggle for survival, every organism is an aggressive autocrat. Meynert called this evil or “parasitical.”⁷⁸ On the other hand, good is a minimalization of evil. The development of civilization is now the same as the repression of “parasitism”. This development in nature can also be traced back to the development of the human individual. A child (and also a madman) is initially an elementary “helpless” personality. That is to say, it is his body (primary ego) which receives stimuli and processes them internally. Meynert also calls this the “parasitical ego”,⁷⁹ living on what it can extract from others and focused on survival. The Darwinistic evolution mechanism gives rise in children to a secondary ego: the development of the brain means the development of the ability to associate and subsequently the ability to be conscious, to think and to be conscientious.⁸⁰ The development of this secondary ego is variable and without boundaries (it has an endless tendency to grow). The motives behind this development include fear, compassion and self-love (that is, self-love for the secondary ego). Impulses from the secondary ego are, for example, getting married and having children. Exactly how endless the growth possibilities of the secondary ego are is evident from Meynert’s concluding remarks, where he links the idea of immortality and eternal life with the idea that – no matter how improbable it may seem from that which has just been asserted – the soul can survive without being connected to a brain.⁸¹

Freud introduces this theory of Meynert in order to make clear that a child is fundamentally amoral, not in the sense of being unspoiled and unaware, but innocent of their bad acts. Note here that we are still dealing with sibling competition. Death wishes against them can be explained by egoism.⁸²

And what about death wishes against one’s parents? Freud first established that when sons have this kind of dream it signifies the harbouring of a death wish against their father and for daughters against their mother.⁸³ Dreams which include a death wish against a parent go back to early childhood. After all, these desires are awakened very early and the first love object is sought in parents. The child’s choice, we gather, falls upon the parent who provides the child with

⁷⁶ *Der Grad, in welchem diese Humanität den Kampf um das Dasein mildert, wäre wohl auch der Grad der Gesittung.* Th. Meynert, *Gehirn und Gesittung*, p.141.

⁷⁷ Idem, p.162.

⁷⁸ Idem, p.166.

⁷⁹ Idem, p.169.

⁸⁰ Idem, pp.171ff.

⁸¹ Idem, pp.179-179.

⁸² S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, SE IV*, p.255.

⁸³ Idem, p.256.

the greatest satisfaction of its needs. Incidentally, this is not a rational, conscious choice. In fact, Freud is talking about a mechanism of attraction and rejection, as we saw above with the primary ego. Infatuation with the one, hate of the other, both develop early and play an important role in the symptomatics of neuroses (especially obsessional neurosis) and, less clearly, also in most children.⁸⁴

Freud then introduces Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, a tragedy which can serve as a model.⁸⁵ It is the story of Oedipus, who is raised abroad because an oracle has told his father Laius that his son would kill him. Far away from home, Oedipus wonders about his origins. An oracle advises him to avoid the land of his birth for it has been foretold that he will kill his father and marry his mother. Despite this warning he goes out and, in fact, kills his father, not knowing that it is his father. Once he solves a sphinx's riddle he is made king of Thebes by the inhabitants and marries the queen, his mother Jocaste. Up until this point Freud treats the story as a model for the fulfilment of the death wish against one parent and infatuation with the other. Years later, when a plague is ravaging the city, an oracle is consulted in order to discover its origin. This is where the real tragedy of *Oedipus Rex* begins. The oracle reports that the plague will vanish when the person who murdered Laius is found and banished. At that point Freud inserts his first citation: "Where shall now be read the fading record of this ancient guilt?"⁸⁶

The interpretation of the tragedy hinges on this. From here on we are no longer dealing with the story as wish fulfilment, but with the story as a model for psychoanalytic work – in psychoanalysis the dark trace of the ancient guilt is read. The quest for the source of the plague, that is, the identification of the guilty party, is a model for a psychoanalytic quest for the unveiling of the causes of dreams. In the tragedy it is Oedipus himself who leads the search for who murdered Laius. He is the detective who ultimately discovers that he himself is the offender. Freud thus uses this myth in order to clarify two things at once: the story as the wish fulfilment of the earliest of childhood desires and as the tragedy of the search for the sources of dreams and fantasies. He then returns to the theme of infatuation and the death wish. This tragedy's appeal depends upon the reader's ability to recognize himself in it.⁸⁷ It shows us the wish fulfilments of our childhood. We can thus recognize ourselves in Oedipus. Yet they are repressed desires and Oedipus knows nothing of them. Analogous to the search for the guilty party, recognition only appears to come when we discover in ourselves the repressed desires. In other words, it is the quest for "guilt" which eventually leads to self-recognition in the tragedy of Oedipus. Only by virtue of the discovery of these repressed desires is it

⁸⁴ Idem, p.261.

⁸⁵ Idem.

⁸⁶ Idem. The original German quotation is *Wo findet sich die schwer erkennbar dunkle Spur der alten Schuld? Das dunkle Spur* is thus translated as "a fading record". In my opinion the translation "a dark trace" would have been better, because in later analyses of the sense of guilt Freud occasionally refers to this citation. It is then indeed translated as "dark trace".

⁸⁷ Idem, pp.262-263.

clear that *Oedipus Rex* is a depiction of the earliest of fantasies: to kill one's father and marry one's mother. Only then is it clear why *Oedipus Rex* has such appeal.

The earliest childhood wishes are "egoistic".⁸⁸ These come from the ego, but which ego did Freud mean? It seems clear to me that this is a reference to Meynert's primary ego. It is clear that these old wishes are repressed, only bubbling up now and again in dreams or appealingly portrayed in a tragedy. Yet these are chiefly repressed because what Meynert calls the secondary ego is assumed by Freud: just like Oedipus, we are unaware of all the desires which clash with our morality. Morality as the characteristic *par excellence* of the secondary ego clouds our view of the primary ego. Morality maintains close relations with unwanted, early desires. It is obvious, in Freud's opinion, that horror and self-punishment thus also have a place in *Oedipus Rex*.⁸⁹ He calls this a "secondary revision of the material".⁹⁰ From this perspective it is thus not so strange that he is writing about "looking for guilt". Seen from the perspective of the secondary ego, that is an understandable quest. Although the primary ego may indeed not be guilty, the secondary ego may feel guilty.

Oedipus lived in ignorance. Hamlet lived conscientiously and repressed his desires. There is a difference and Freud gives it a name – the comparison of different "cultural epochs of civilization" reveals "a secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind".⁹¹ A similar thought fits, for example, Meynert's theories on moral development. In fact, he also says that in his own time repression had experienced a provisional high. The Oedipus tragedy reveals the repressed within a Victorian, bourgeois environment.

2.6 "My 'ought' set before me"

During his period of self-analysis we see in Freud an increasing interest in "developmental psychology". (His approving citation of Meynert, *inter alia*, demonstrates this.) In a letter to Fliess his interest in this topic is evidenced as early as November 1897. He wrote that he found his own discoveries confirmed in a book by the philosopher and psychologist James Mark Baldwin (1861-1934) entitled *Mental Development*, 1895.⁹² Like Meynert, Baldwin starts with Darwin's theory of evolution. His point of departure is thus once again thinking in terms of development and growth. Baldwin made clear that he saw an "analogy" between ontogenetic and phylogenetic developments.⁹³ In other words, the development

⁸⁸ Idem, p.367.

⁸⁹ Idem, p.264.

⁹⁰ Idem.

⁹¹ Idem.

⁹² S. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, p.277.

⁹³ J.M. Baldwin, *Mental Development in the Child and the Race. Methods and Processes*, Routledge, London, 1995, pp.1-20.

and growth of an individual is analogous to the development (evolution) of the species.

Baldwin heavily emphasizes the ability to imitate. Imitation is the basis of development.⁹⁴ This principle also underlies the development of the world of feelings and thought. The development of morality is treated by Baldwin in a section on the development of emotion.⁹⁵ The reason for this is simple: moral consciousness is based on sympathy with another; sympathy is imitatively derived from emotions of sympathy expressed by others.⁹⁶ He extensively describes how children develop an understanding of others. A child first sees others as objects and only subsequently as people. By virtue of what he calls a “projective stage”, the image of the other (the person) is internalized: subjectivity, self-notion, is based on the image of the other/others.⁹⁷ It is from this subjectivity that a child is subsequently in a position to see someone else also as a “self”, the other as a person with “experiences like mine”. He called this an “ejective stage”.⁹⁸ This is the phase in which the “social self” is born. To sum up, “My sense of myself grows by imitation of you, and my sense of yourself grows in terms of my sense of myself”.⁹⁹ Ego and alter are by definition social, that is to say, imitatively formed based on one another.

The hallmark of moral consciousness or “ethical feeling” is the “desire” to do good. Yet how can we desire? And what is good? Baldwin here emphasizes authority and obedience.¹⁰⁰ Via the same principle of sympathy, based on projection and ejection, children also internalize what Baldwin calls an “ideal self, my final pattern, my ‘ought’ set before me”.¹⁰¹ This ideal self is a moral self which theoretically maintains harmony between personal tendencies and social contacts. This is a supplement to Darwin and to Meynert, to whom he refers a few times. For them man is embroiled in a conflict between sympathy and egoism. Baldwin believes this unfair both to the legal characteristics of morality and to the principles which are upheld. Thus according to him children develop not only sympathy versus egoism, but also learn to submit to authority.

Baldwin is not mentioned by Freud further, but this book had a lasting effect for Freud gained an eye for the concept of authority. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* he spoke for the first time about the authority of the father, in the section on absurd dreams.¹⁰² In that part he analysed some dreams about fathers. The first

⁹⁴ Idem, pp.81ff, pp.130ff, p.291ff.

⁹⁵ Idem, pp.332-348.

⁹⁶ Idem, pp.333ff.

⁹⁷ Idem, p.336.

⁹⁸ Idem, p.338.

⁹⁹ Idem.

¹⁰⁰ Idem, pp.343ff.

¹⁰¹ Idem. p.345.

¹⁰² “A dream is made absurd, then, if a judgement that something ‘is absurd’ is among the elements included in the dream-thoughts.” S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, SE V*, p.434.

is a patient's dream about an aggrieved father.¹⁰³ The second is one of his own dreams about his father. It is a dream in which after his death his father played "a political part among the Magyars and brought them together politically".¹⁰⁴ In the dream he reminded himself that his father looked like the Italian patriot Garibaldi when on his deathbed.¹⁰⁵ It is thus a dream in which his dead father makes a live appearance. As concerns the interpretation of this and other similar dreams, Freud mentions another dream reported to him by a patient. A man who had cared for his dying father dreamed that his father was alive again and spoke to him as he had always done.¹⁰⁶ This was absurd, for he was dead and evidently did not even know it. Freud's interpretation consists of a consistent implication that the dream and its various elements express the dreamer's desire. The dreamer thus wishes that his father were dead, a wish which stems from compassion for the sick man. After his death this merciful wish acquired the character of a self-reproach, as if the wish had contributed to the actual death. This reproach is repressed, but returns in the dream in veiled form.

Dreams about the deceased, Freud states, are difficult to interpret. The reason for this lies in the ambivalence of feelings regarding the deceased. The wish that the deceased be alive again, or that someone who is living die, can alternate. How can this ambivalence be further interpreted? In the first place, what he mentions is known from the Oedipus complex: there is an early rivalry between sons and fathers. In the second place, there is the father's authority. A father simply has authority and children are critical of this.¹⁰⁷ Fathers make demands which force a child to be extra sharp when looking for weaknesses in their father (in order to be able to compete). In other words, Freud suggests that a more powerful authority also strengthens critical feelings. Put another way, the measure of a father's authority eventually also determines the degree of ambivalence.¹⁰⁸

Freud subsequently continues the analysis of absurdities with two more of his own dreams. The first is again about his father, but the analysis appears to refer to Meynert whom he not only honoured as a teacher but had also regarded as "hostile".¹⁰⁹ The second dream was about Goethe.¹¹⁰ He states in this connection anew that dreams are egoistic: the death wish towards loved ones is an egoistic wish (the Oedipal desire to possess the mother is as well). In contrast is sympathy, the piety for a loved rival.¹¹¹ What is introduced here as the new element is the

¹⁰³ Idem, pp.426-427.

¹⁰⁴ Idem, p.427.

¹⁰⁵ Idem, p.428.

¹⁰⁶ Idem, p.430.

¹⁰⁷ Idem, p.435.

¹⁰⁸ Idem.

¹⁰⁹ Idem, pp.435-439.

¹¹⁰ Idem, pp.439ff.

¹¹¹ Idem, pp.439-440.

father's authority. For the time being this notion serves to describe ambivalent feelings in greater depth.

2.7 Primary and secondary processes

Freud saw desires and wishes as coming from the primary ego; he set morality against this. These two are in conflict with one another. We have already seen that the conflict between these two is played out in the preconscious. Dream analyses demonstrate that unconscious wishes can sneak into consciousness in disguise. There is evidently a largely unconscious resistance to desires which conflict with morality. The conflict between desire and morality does not simply correspond with the distinction between unconscious and conscious.

At this time he developed an elaborate topical model to describe the entire mental apparatus. It would lead us too far astray to detail his theories on this subject exactly. Their fundamental principles can be found in his 1895 *Project for a Scientific Psychology*. Elaboration on these ideas can be found in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.¹¹² He describes the psychological apparatus as a connected whole of nearly autonomous and regularly operating systems. There is thus a perception system which receives stimuli (hunger, pain), and a memory system in which the various perceived stimuli and ideas are associatively bound together. These systems are unconscious and it is here that an accumulation of tension can originate. Subsequently, the unpleasure principle becomes effective, and a diminution of tension is experienced as pleasure. Dreams as wish fulfilments are a means to achieve this ("primary system"). Yet a dream is also a veiled wish fulfilment. A censoring system remains which Freud localized in the preconscious. This, too, is an autonomous mechanism. Repression is not a conscious desire to remain ignorant, but a continuous countermovement against thoughts which repeatedly recur. He is speaking here of censorship ('secondary system').¹¹³ The essence of this is that owing to it an individual is capable of consciously working through an originally intolerable idea: the tension, the affect, is linked anew with other ideas.

Primary and secondary processes are thus two conflicting systems. The question is how this second system relates to the first. How is it capable of acting as a censor? Freud believed that the censorship must not be seen as a kind of distraction from unpleasure, but as a system that "inhibits" the discharge of unpleasurable memories such that the direct release of unpleasure is avoided.¹¹⁴ In other words, the unpleasure principle itself is the regulator for the reduction of tension in the

¹¹² S. Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology*; S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE V, pp.536ff, pp.598-609.

¹¹³ For a short outline on the primary and secondary processes see J.-M. Quinodoz, *Reading Freud. A Chronological Exploration of Freud's Writings*, Routledge, London, New York, 2005, p.27.

¹¹⁴ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE V, pp.599-601.

second system. After all, the principle is that tension is not directly discharged or counteracted, but drained off. Containment is essential for this; the second system is, one could say, given time to link the tension with ideas which together form the thought-process.¹¹⁵ It is exactly for this reason that the dreamer is not frightened awake by each idea within a dream, but sleeps soundly while the dream “thinks through” its own story and logic.

In a later addition to *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud differentiated between primary and secondary processes as the difference between the pleasure and reality principles.¹¹⁶ He elaborated this last term in his 1911 *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning*. In that short, complex text the reality principle is not a formulation of an adaptation by the individual to real circumstances which makes the immediate need satisfaction impossible. In that case the reality principle would denote a conscious assessment of possibilities, impossibilities and utility. This is not what is meant by the reality principle. He meant that in order for a child to satisfy its needs it must develop a certain degree of control over reality in order to gain “assured pleasure at a later time” for example in the after-life.¹¹⁷ By thinking and remembering children create links and thereby insight into reality for the express purpose of employing outside reality to satisfy their need for pleasure. The reality principle thus serves the pleasure principle.¹¹⁸ In this we can again recognize the relationship between primary and secondary processes: the secondary process is not an internalized external morality which prevents each pleasure, but rather a check – censorship – on the gradual discharge of unpleasure that this discharge can also result in pleasure (and thus does not result in new unpleasure). The secondary process serves the primary process.¹¹⁹ The conflicting primary and secondary processes are essentially a theoretical model that describes the relationship between wish and morality. Sense of guilt forms the tension between the two.¹²⁰ Here, we touch upon an ambiguity (or compromise) in Freudian thought: the possibility of pleasure is only safeguarded within a conflictuous structure including sense of guilt.

¹¹⁵ Idem, p.602.

¹¹⁶ Idem, p.567 (footnote).

¹¹⁷ S. Freud, *Formulations on the two Principles of Mental Functioning*, SE XII, p.223. This idea will later be elaborated upon in *The Future of an Illusion*.

¹¹⁸ “Actually the substitution of the reality principle implies no deposing of the pleasure principle, but only a safeguarding of it.” Idem. See also J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1967, p.336.

¹¹⁹ This idea is already presented in *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, when Freud argues that a child is “helpless” not only because it needs others to supply needs, but also because the child itself is defenceless against its own primary processes, that is, the autonomous urges and discharges of unpleasure. It is for these reasons – in combination – that helplessness is the source of moral motives. (The issue of helplessness will later also be elaborated upon in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* and in *The Future of an Illusion*.) S. Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, pp.317-318.

¹²⁰ It is for this reason that *Formulations on the two Principles of Mental Functioning* ends with a short discussion of death wishes against the father and the self-reproaches that emanate from this wish. S. Freud, *Formulations on the two Principles of Mental Functioning*, p.225.

Chapter 3

Repressed desires

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter we return to Viennese bourgeois society and our analysis of neuroses, specifically obsessional neuroses. This chapter covers roughly the first decade of the twentieth century, a period during which attention shifted from hysteria to obsessional neuroses as it is in these neuroses that sense of guilt and oppressive morality are prominently found. They thus appeared to be the perfect place for Freud to look for the origins of morality and guilt. However, analysing obsessional neuroses is not the only way to approach the problem of guilt and morality. Freud's analysis of cultural morality stemmed from his analogy of it with obsessional neuroses. His findings and explorations in this area are central to this chapter.

It is important to keep the development of Freud's thought in mind for the rest of this study. Our point of departure is Freud's investigation into the origins of unpleasure, morality and sense of guilt. These issues forced him to abandon the seduction theory and take the radical step of focusing on infantile sexuality and amorality. Via his self-analysis he detected the first contours of our oldest and deepest desires: the quest for "an old guilt" led him to affectionate and hostile desires. These analyses of self-reproach were the basis from which he then analysed obsessional neuroses and cultural morality. Freud's analysis of sense of guilt, which began to play a consistently more central role in his work (above all in the 1920s and 1930s), is not an effect of his analysis of obsessional neuroses and cultural morality, but rather should be understood the other way around.

It was in the first decade of the twentieth century that Freud attracted his first students and, subsequently, experienced the first breaks with them. It was also at this time that his work was increasingly discovered by proponents and opponents. We shall see in this chapter and the following how the central themes of infantile sexuality, morality and guilt yielded both recognition as well as misunderstandings and rejection.

In his self-analysis, which was, *inter alia*, an analysis of self-reproach and a quest for its hidden causes, Freud focused on the inner conflict between repressed desires and internal censorship. In fact, all of this is a continuation of his earlier theories on the defence against intolerable ideas, resistance and repression. He also wrote at that time that repression was a central discovery and formed the point of departure for further theorizing. What is being repressed? The simplest answer was "sexuality".¹ While searching for the causes of this conflict, he found himself – via the seduction theory – at infantile sexuality. The source of the conflict between

¹ S. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, p.33.

that which was repressed and that which is being repressed lay in childhood. These two themes, (infantile) sexuality and repression, were central to Freud's work in the years after his self-analysis.

Sexuality and repression: we have returned to chapter one and Freud's first ideas as stimulated by *Carmen*. The refined, modern bourgeois mentality appears to be characterized by repression and drives. Freud's first patients were refined bourgeoisie. He lauded, for example, Emmy von N. for her moral character and for successfully repressing strong sexual desires. Elisabeth von R.'s entire moral being revolted against intolerable ideas. And was not Dora's "no" to Herr K. also a fine example of defence against a repressed wish?

In a 1905 article Freud addressed the role of sexuality in the origin of neuroses based upon clinical experience and supplemented with some speculation.² He made clear that this piece was an elaboration of earlier theories on neurasthenia and the separately distinguishable anxiety neuroses. He briefly described in this article how he discovered the important role played by sexuality in the emergence of neuroses. He discusses Charcot and Breuer's cathartic method, the seduction theory and the discovery of the defences against infantile sexuality, the theory of consciousness splitting, repression, and the origins of the unconscious. He also describes how he initially spoke about the defence against intolerable ideas, defence as a conscious not wanting to know. That, according to Freud, was a purely psychological term at that time. In 1905 he replaced the term defence with the more organic repression of sexuality. At the end of the article he writes, "we have been led on imperceptibly from the question of the causation of the psychoneuroses to the problem of their essential nature". This essential nature is the sexual processes which determine "the formation and utilization of sexual libido".³ The search for the origin of morality, lust and unpleasure, the quest along the dark trail of guilt to the Oedipus complex, led to a subject that now deserved clarification: sexuality.

3.2 *Formation and utilization of sexuality*

Freud sought to chart the essence and meaning of sexuality and to do so via an analysis of infantile sexuality. The result was *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, which appeared in 1905 but was significantly expanded during the subsequent decade.⁴

In the first essay he maps a whole range of abnormalities. Not without irony, Freud relates the popular "fable" about sexual drives: every person is divided into a male and female half which try to unite themselves in love.⁵ For men the sexual

² S. Freud, *My Views on the Part played by Sexuality in the Aetiology of the Neuroses*, SE VII.

³ Idem, p.278.

⁴ S. Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, SE VII. Important additions or reformulations were made in the revised editions of 1910, 1915, and 1920.

⁵ Idem, p.136.

object is, so to speak, women. Union in love is then the sexual goal. So much for the poetic fable, for directly thereafter come the first abnormalities as concerns “object” (the person toward whom sexual urges are directed). Freud was searching for the link between all of these abnormalities and supposed normality.⁶ Theories that traced abnormalities back to congenital degeneracy were missing just this link. In addition, abnormalities were also manifest in people of high intellect and morality. The link between sexual urge and sexual object appeared to be innate, but this link is very loose: the sexual drive is probably initially independent of any specific object.⁷ During development one particular object gradually gains the upper hand. Here, Freud is dealing with heterosexuality and homosexuality concretely. He does indeed see drives as a biological given, that is to say, the drives have a somatic origin. Freud defined it as the “psychical representative of an endosomatic source of stimulation”.⁸ For psychoanalysis this drive is thus only an object of study when it is mentally represented in ideas or affect or both.⁹

The “fable” of the normal “aim” follows that of the normal object; by normal we mean genital union of man and woman resulting in the release of sexual tension and satisfaction of the sexual drive.¹⁰ This too is a fable, for various perversions such as fetishism, voyeurism and masochism demonstrate that the goal is seldom limited to the genitals. Thus, what is normal? Everyday normality and abnormalities from it prove that, at any rate, “fables” are not wrong. Thus, ironically enough, Freud arrives at the position where it is exactly the most disgusting perversions that appear to have the greatest mental processing of the sexual urge. In “normal” love the urge is primarily inhibited. In other words, the grandeur of love evidences itself nowhere more than in perversion. Freud dealt here seriously with the conventional distinction between normal and perverse: the first essay is thus in fact a critique of bourgeois morality. There is no homogenous sexuality which develops only at puberty and which can be called normal, and abnormalities are not degeneration from the norm. Behind bourgeois façades lie the same fantasies as “abnormals” have.

What is central to neurotics is that everything burdened with affect – ideas, wishes and desires – is denied access to conscious processing. In other words, we are dealing here with repression (of sexuality). In hysteria the consequence is conversion: the physical symptom is a substitute for the repressed wish or

⁶ Gay has rightfully argued that the essays on sexuality and the unveiling of fables certainly imply a “subversion of middle-class pieties”. Bourgeois morality is undermined. P. Gay, *Freud*, p.143.

⁷ S. Freud, *Three Essays*, p.148.

⁸ Idem, p.168. In the *Standard Edition* the concept of *Trieb* is often translated as “instinct”. Geyskens has argued rightfully that drive should not be equated with instinct. The drive is a concept between somatic and psychic, whereas instinct can only indicate an innate disposition towards, for example, the choice of sexual object. T. Geyskens, *Never Remembered*, pp.37-38.

⁹ Compare also P. Moyaert, *Begeren en vereren. Idealisering en sublimering*, SUN, Nijmegen, 2002, p.62.

¹⁰ S. Freud, *Three Essays*, pp.149ff.

desire. Resistance manifests itself as shame, disgust and morality.¹¹ Freud had not considered morality a resistance against perversion, but with hysteria he did. He failed to indicate why he did so, but it seems he was falling back on his earlier description of perversion as immorality. It is the repressive power of morality which leads to symptoms typical of hysteria. These are not the degeneration of the so-called normal drives, but a converted expression of them. Put another way, that which in a perversion is immediately expressed in fantasy is in neurotic cases twisted, converted, inhibited; but the unconscious fantasies of the neurotic are the same as the conscious fantasies of the pervert.

The disposition to perversion is thus normal.¹² This idea leads us to the second essay, about infantile sexuality, for it is there that the seeds of perversion are most clearly evident and the drives are less intense. The presumed logic is relatively straightforward: if a perverse disposition is normal, we may then assume that this develops over time in order to be later repressed.¹³ Mental power is accrued during childhood and later used to curb and contain the sexual drives, namely “disgust, feelings of shame and the claims of aesthetic and moral ideals”. The specific content of these “reaction formations” appears to be determined by upbringing but is organically determined while being constructed; that is to say, it flows from the drives.¹⁴

How did Freud present these impediments and “dams”? He had spoken earlier about a certain construction of sexual pressure in childhood, a tension which was unleashed in puberty and was then habituated to, for example, cultural ends. A child is full of urges which are later expressed when thorough somatic or mental organization is achieved. In his *Three Essays*, Freud’s containment is presented as an extension of the first intuitions regarding an organization of accumulated tension. In puberty infantile sexual drives may be partly or largely diverted toward a non-sexual aim and used for other socially acceptable ends. Freud called this latter process sublimation, a term that for the time being he saw as a derivative of reaction formation.¹⁵

Sublimation is the middle road between two poles (each other’s “negatives”¹⁶): perversion and neurosis. The thinking runs like this: infantile sexuality is polymorphously perverse. The period thereafter Freud called the latency period, a period in which the mental dams against sexual urges are built up.¹⁷ Only at puberty

¹¹ Idem, p.162, p.164.

¹² Idem, p.165.

¹³ Idem, p.172.

¹⁴ Idem, pp.177-178.

¹⁵ Idem, p.178. From the 1915 version on, Freud clearly differentiated sublimation from reaction formation.

¹⁶ Idem, p.165. On sublimation and reaction formation see M. Vansina, *Het super-ego*, pp.78-90; P. Moyaert, *Begeren en vereren*, pp.89-90.

¹⁷ In *Character and Anal Erotism* (1908) the latency period is situated between the ages of five and eleven. S. Freud, *Character and Anal Erotism*, SE IX, p.171.

is sexuality definitely structured. The conflict in puberty is between (infantile) sexuality on the one hand and the “moral defensive forces at the cost of sexuality” on the other.¹⁸ The outcome is thus determined by inner counterforces, but also by the possibilities and impossibilities the culture offers as well as morality as determined by culture. The result of this conflict (that is, the adult character) is determinative for the development of a perversion (given a structural failure), a neurosis (when sexual urges are drastically repressed) or of sublimation (when sexual drives are diverted from sexual to other, socially valued aims).¹⁹

Why are drives diverted? The sexual drive aims at reproduction, but in children the reproductive function is not yet developed. Thus the urge is there but the predestined goal is not, and this gives rise to unpleasure. This unpleasure awakens counter-reactions: repression by unpleasure via containment including disgust, shame and morality. It is clear that Freud here is repeating his oldest ideas: culture is based on the containment of drives. The highest culture – not forgetting that Freud is referring to the bourgeois culture of his age – is not based on a long moral evolution in which degeneration is sometimes manifest, nor is it based primarily on upbringing (or seduction), but rather on the fate of the sexual drives and their individual outcomes.

The first vicissitudes of the sexual drive are determined by physical satisfaction. Early sexuality is auto-erotic, as Freud now referred to it.²⁰ The term was borrowed from Havelock Ellis, who used it to refer to sexual emotion not caused by external stimulation.²¹ In the foreword to the fourth edition (1920) of *Three Essays*, Freud poses the question which was pressing: what is sexuality really? Freud answered this by claiming that the term was so “enlarged” that it corresponded to the platonic term “Eros”.²² Seen in this way, auto-erotic is the same as auto-sexual, but that is naturally no answer. What did Freud mean by sexuality in 1905? It is in any case clear that the essence of sexuality, that is to say its fundamental origin, is biochemical. This leaves its meaning undefined. The example of infantile sexuality Freud uses is sucking (on a nipple or a thumb, for example).²³ The drive, the urge, is mentally understood as a desire seeking satisfaction. The child “chooses” a body part which it believes will provide satisfaction. This choice is determined

¹⁸ S. Freud, *Three Essays*, p.179.

¹⁹ Idem, p.178, pp.237-238. Compare S. Freud, *Character and Anal Erotism*, p.171.

²⁰ S. Freud, *Three Essays*, p.181.

²¹ H. Ellis, *Auto-erotism*, in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Vol. 1*, Heinemann Medical books, London, 1948, pp.161-339 (originally published in 1898). Havelock Ellis merely regards auto-erotism as the absence of an outside stimulus. Freud stresses the idea that auto-erotism is finding satisfaction in/with one’s own body.

²² S. Freud, *Three Essays*, p.134.

²³ Idem, pp.179-181. On this subject see P. Moyaert, *Begeren en vereren*, pp.58-63. The example of sucking should not lead us to think that Freud is a pansexualist. Not every act can be reduced to the sexual drive. On the other hand, it should be noticed that sexuality is a broad term, certainly when we consider that jokes and aesthetic experiences generate “fore-pleasure”. S. Freud, *Three Essays*, p.211; P. Gay, *Freud*, p.148.

by the first source of satisfaction: the mother's breast. It is thus the memory of the breast which motivates the search for new sources of satisfaction. The essence of sexuality is biochemically determined,²⁴ but the meaning of sexuality extends beyond those borders: sucking can have a sexual meaning. Yet Freud differentiates between the meaning of sexuality in children and adults: after puberty – and more about this below – it is distinctly less likely that sucking retains its sexual meaning.

The breadth of the term sexuality is also evident in Freud's other designation of infantile sexuality: child sexuality is by nature polymorphously perverse.²⁵ As with an uncivilized person, this means that the sexual drives have not been contained. Curiosity regarding the sexual organs is not contained by shame or disgust. Cruelty (which can later develop into sadism or masochism) is not yet contained by morality. Later in *Three Essays* Freud adds pity (or compassion) as curtailing force.²⁶

The third essay deals with puberty, during which time infantile sexuality takes its final shape and is given meaning.²⁷ The sexual drive was auto-erotic and only now finds its definitive sexual object and goal.²⁸ Now the drives begin to serve a reproductive end. Puberty is the period during which the experiences of childhood pleasure and unpleasure result in neurosis, perversion or sublimation. What is also clear is that society's influence is greatest during puberty: in societies which frown upon homosexuality, for example, this is less prominently expressed and vice versa. It is also in puberty that the definitive differentiation between male and female character originates.²⁹ This means that men repress their female sexuality and women their male sexuality. The search for a love object is largely determined by the quest to rediscover the first love bond, that between mother and child. That this "rediscovery" is not really a rediscovery is a consequence of the internalization of the incest prohibition which is also imposed by society.³⁰

It is during the latency period – the period between early infancy and puberty – that the inner counterforces (shame, disgust and compassion) and the social

²⁴ In the essays the exact influence of chemical processes remains a riddle, nor are they an object of psychoanalysis. S. Freud, *Three Essays*, p.243.

²⁵ *Idem*, p.191.

²⁶ *Idem*, p.219, p.231. We should notice that pity and morality are closely related. We have already seen in the previous chapter that compassion was associated with self-reproach and cruel wishes against the father. Morality is regarded as a "dam" against cruel wishes. However, in his essays on sexuality, Freud does not elaborate on the exact relationship between compassion and morality. In this respect it is also interesting to note that the Oedipus complex does not play a role in the 1905 and 1910 editions of the essays.

²⁷ *Idem*, pp.207ff.

²⁸ From the 1915 version on Freud will argue that the choice of object is already made before puberty in the so-called phallic phase, which will later also be called the Oedipal phase. This means that the distinction between infantile and adult sexuality becomes more blurred. *Idem*, p.207.

²⁹ *Idem*, pp.219ff.

³⁰ *Idem*, pp.225ff.

constructions around morality and authority are built up to combat sexual urges.³¹ Yet it is only in puberty that sexuality is definitely structured. The conflict in puberty is between infantile sexuality on the one hand and limitations and results determined by the counterforces on the other. Its outcome is determined by the inner counterforces that are “organically determined and fixed by heredity”,³² but certainly also by the social possibilities and impossibilities and education. Freud’s cultural criticism is here portrayed. Sexual development results in a conflict during puberty in which education and cultural pressure are determining factors. This means that this conflict is the origin of both the development of a higher level of culture as well as the tendency towards neurosis.³³ These two lie dangerously close to one another, all the more since a more advanced culture demands more of its members. He concludes that it is easier for neuroses to manifest themselves in advanced cultures than in less advanced ones in which we often find freer sexual development. Freud closes the circle: beginning with the origin of neuroses, he ends up examining the essence of sexuality. At the close of *Three Essays* he returns to the origin of neuroses.

Freud pays no explicit attention to self-reproach or sense of guilt in *Three Essays*. The issue is not elaborated upon, despite the fact that the preceding chapters have shown that these terms were often mentioned together with disgust, shame and morality. He sees disgust as a reaction to what was previously experienced as pleasure. During the process whereby polymorphous perversion is contained and erogenous zones are subsumed under the primacy of the sexual organs, disgust is directed at the desire which had been bound up with those zones which later become erogenous, particularly the mouth and anus. This is true of shame, too, but principally as regards visual pleasure: voyeurs are without shame, but in a “normal” person visual pleasure is restrained. And which perversion does morality curtail? If disgust can be linked with the formally erogenous zones (mouth and anus) and shame with voyeurism, then it is reasonable to assume that morality, too, can be linked to a third group of perversions Freud mentions, to wit, sadism and masochism.³⁴ He treats these two as a fusion of sexuality with aggression, and although he does not explicitly mention the counterforce(s), he does indicate that the “cruel component of the sexual instinct” is not yet curbed by compassion. However, this compassion is developed relatively late, and the cruel component of the sexual drive has not yet been fundamentally analysed.³⁵

We saw in the previous chapter that compassion stems from self-reproach, which in turn stems from hostile feelings toward parents or siblings. The reverse was also true, self-reproach can stem from compassion. The association of compassion and

³¹ Idem, p.177.

³² Idem.

³³ Idem, p.242.

³⁴ Idem, pp.157-160.

³⁵ Idem, pp.192-193.

cruelty thus takes us back to familiar ground: the Oedipal issue and the origin of morality. The trail of self-reproach (and even self-punishment) and compassion lead back to hostile feelings towards the father. We could say that morality is the counterforce against infantile aggression, but then we would be stating something Freud for now leaves unsaid. After all, we have already seen that the origin of morality remained a problem and a riddle. The same is true for the source of self-reproach and sense of guilt. In 1908 Freud once again declared that research into the source of sense of guilt was complex and that a multitude of factors play a role, but “what is certain is that guilt feelings come into being through the ruin of sexual impulses”.³⁶ Perhaps this explains why in *Three Essays* Freud did not link sadism and masochism to a specific “dam” and why he had nothing further to say about self-reproach and sense of guilt. The themes of morality and sense of guilt would have led him astray from his project of charting the essence and meaning of sexuality. Yet in various publications around *Three Essays* sense of guilt and morality do indeed play an important role. This is evident in the themes to which Freud returned at the end: the development of neuroses in connection to culture.

3.3 Weaknesses in the system

In *Three Essays* Freud strongly opposed the “fables” of normal sexual relations. In this regard the work is sensational, but he was not the only one investigating sexuality’s relationship to pathologies and *fin de siècle* culture. The American George Beard introduced the term neurasthenia³⁷ in 1869 and had already linked the origins of general nervousness with sexuality. This was the principle subject of *Sexual Neurasthenia*, 1884.³⁸ The first thing that was clear to Beard was that neurasthenia was a modern disease: modern civilization places such high demands on the individual that they can overload the nervous system. Apart from this cultural context, there are also particular moments during which overload can occur. He listed alcohol, nicotine and drugs, climate and sexual excesses, including masturbation, impotence, condom use and *coitus interruptus*. These excesses exhibit a momentary or local overload of the nervous system. Following from this, Beard addressed what can be called normal sexual relations within a marriage emphasizing moderate sexual intercourse for purposes of procreation, to facilitate sleep and digestion, and the strengthening of the nervous system. What he described here as healthy is exactly what Freud called a fable: man and woman with normal, moderate sexual intercourse in the service of gratifying procreation. Imitating Beard, a number of studies appeared in the 1880s and 1890s on the

³⁶ P. Gay, *Freud*, p.324.

³⁷ On neurasthenia in the *fin de siècle* see M. Gijswijt-Hofstra, R. Porter (eds.), *Cultures of Neurasthenia from Beard to the First World War*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2001.

³⁸ I used the German translation: G. Beard, *Die sexuelle Neurasthie, ihre Hygiene, Aetiologie, Symptomatologie und Behandlung*, Deuticke Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna, 1890.

connection between neurasthenia and modern culture. Examples of these include those by Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Leopold Löwenfeld. Freud simultaneously built upon and criticized these men and their work.

In his 1895 *Nervosität und neurasthenische Zustände* [Nervousness and Neurasthenic Conditions], Krafft-Ebing portrayed neurasthenia as harmful to the nervous system partly due to hereditary predisposition and partly due to external somatic causes and stimuli. This neurasthenia is a special form of nervousness. The latter he defined as “an innate disposition consisting of a pathological change in the central nervous system”.³⁹ Nervousness is thus initially traced back to hereditary predisposition, but it can also arise when the correct balance between accumulation and expenditure of nervous energy is upset. Neurasthenia is subsequently defined as “the abnormal limitations and expenditure of the nervous system”.⁴⁰ This makes nervousness and neurasthenia a fashionable disease to a certain extent. In other words, the Darwinian “struggle for existence” is the motto of modern civilization. That means increasing competition, unhealthy living conditions in industrial areas, and conflict over status and possessions. Krafft-Ebing saw signs of this in women’s emancipation in employment, a subject upon which Freud had also commented a decade earlier. Child-rearing was also characteristic of the preparation for this “battle”. Krafft-Ebing is thus pleading for a normal, bourgeois marriage, i.e. something that could prevent many excesses and aberrations.⁴¹

We have already seen that Freud responded to Leopold Löwenfeld’s criticism of his work in 1895.⁴² Four years earlier Löwenfeld had published on sexuality’s link with neurasthenia.⁴³ His point of departure vis-à-vis sexuality is the idea that it serves procreation. Sexuality thus also normally plays a role when the sexual organs mature, that is, in puberty. Abnormalities are supplied under this stipulation. With regard to neurasthenia, Löwenfeld saw it as damage to the nervous system generally based on heredity, but also possibly the result of or reinforced by an excess of sexual drive. Cultural stimuli of all kinds can arouse and intensify these drives. In the third edition (1903) Löwenfeld dedicated a separate chapter to

³⁹ R. von Krafft-Ebing, *Nervosität und neurasthenische Zustände*, p.4.

⁴⁰ Idem, p.36.

⁴¹ A comparable theory can be found in the writings of Otto Binswanger. He also defines neurasthenia in terms of a pathological disposition of the nervous system, caused by a hereditary weakness. Psychic damage also plays a role: depressing affects, bitterness, etc. Neurasthenia can further be caused by a range of factors: stress, intellectual exhaustion, sexual excesses, a culture of pleasure and its effects on the emotional life, etc. O. Binswanger, *Die Pathologie und Therapie der Neurasthenie. Vorlesungen für Studierende und Ärzte*, Fischer, Jena, 1896.

⁴² S. Freud, *A Reply to Criticisms of my Paper on Anxiety Neurosis*. In this text Freud reacted to L. Löwenfeld, “Über die Verknüpfung neurasthenischer und hysterischer Symptome in Anfallsform nebst Bemerkungen über die Freud’sche ‘Angstneurose’”, in *Münchener Medicinische Wochenschrift* 1895/13, pp.282-285.

⁴³ L. Löwenfeld, *Sexualleben und Nervenleiden. Die nervöse Störungen sexuellen Ursprungs, nebst einem Anhang über Prophylaxe und Behandlung der sexuellen Neurasthenie*, Bergmann Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1903 (originally published in 1891).

Freud.⁴⁴ Freud's emphasis on sexual development beginning in childhood meant, according to Löwenfeld, that he paid too little attention to hereditary conditions and the influence of over-taxation and the emotional ups and downs that are the result of modern culture. Incidentally, he was convinced that a strong libido could also be the cause of neurasthenia and that resulting excesses in homosexual activity or masturbation could "disrupt" the nervous system.⁴⁵ An important critique of Freud is his lack of clinical evidence. Löwenfeld meant by this that Freud influenced his patients via suggestion and guided them in the direction of early sexual trauma. In addition, he assumed fantasies to be reality. Finally, Löwenfeld considered it implausible that traumas could lie buried for decades. Among civilized people it was conceivable, but hysteria is also found among primitive peoples, and given that he believed such people had no historical consciousness or moral development, it was out of the question that they could repress and remember.

Authors such as Krafft-Ebing and Löwenfeld linked neurasthenia and sexual abnormalities. They had no doubt that culture can have a negative influence on people's physical and mental states. They followed Darwin in believing that civilization had evolved and continuously reached a higher moral standard. Bourgeois society constituted the apex of this development. In more advanced cultures sexual urges were normally absorbed by morality and decorum, the passions transformed into love, or better still, they were used entirely for the purpose of procreation. The emphasis on equilibrium, prudence, moderation and order fitted that image. After all, in more advanced cultures the baser impulses were kept well in check. That is, ...unless something goes wrong hereditarily, or pressure increases on rearing or in society, or when bad habits and external stimuli disrupt normal, healthy life. The criticism these writers had of modern culture is thus also a critique of the pressure, stress and tension that modern society produces. It is full of stimuli and their consequence is violent mood swings aimed at pleasure, but without true satisfaction. A particular philosophy of life lies behind this point of view: a more advanced culture is a sensible, well-balanced, modest and refined culture. Normal people are capable of repressing or reining in violent emotions. Normal people stay calm under pressure. It is the weak-willed who exhibit violent emotional outbursts. It is the weak-willed who ensure that sexual excesses emerge. Masturbation is merely a sign of this weakness; ultimately it has little to do with the cause of neurasthenia or other pathologies, but is rather an expression of them. Both the clear difference between normal and pathological and childhood asexuality are also shared views. Sexuality is only expressed after maturity, after it has sufficiently grown somatically and mentally. Whether a disorder subsequently arises which can be linked to a sexual "abnormality" depends on heredity and various social and cultural circumstances. The point of

⁴⁴ Idem, pp.198-206.

⁴⁵ Idem, pp.240-241.

departure in civilized society is thus normality; this is why the repression of drives was regarded as something positive: they served civilization.

To a certain extent Freud will always show a certain affinity with authors such as Krafft-Ebing. He dealt, for example, with nervousness and neurasthenia as physiological concerns: a weak will is ultimately weak nerves. Freud also repeatedly resorted to terms and ways of thinking from physiology, for example when he describes unpleasure as energy or the essence of sexuality as metabolism. His interest in sexuality also links him to sexologists such as Krafft-Ebing, but Freud's approach has its origin in a completely different "philosophy". This is radically expressed in *Three Essays*: he no longer proceeds from normality or from normal sexual relations, but from pathology. The exploration of pleasure and unpleasure allowed him to conclude that (a) infantile sexuality existed and (b) that it had a polymorphously perverse character. All authors up to that point had assumed the asexuality of children. Sexuality only became an issue in puberty when the genitals were fully developed and could be put into action for the purpose of reproduction. Freud turned this relationship around and even went a step further: what we call morality, or higher culture, is based on a dynamic which has its origin in the perverse character of infantile sexuality. Put another way, in puberty it is not about whether a person is prepared to defend against the stress and temptations of modern life, but rather about an inner conflict between urges and satisfying the need for pleasure and containment as a mental reaction. Culture itself is based on this conflict. And normality? Normality is a fable. In 1905 Freud knew to expect criticism of these positions and he received it in spades.⁴⁶

3.4 Attack and defence

Löwenfeld was not the only one to offer criticism. Gustav Aschaffenburg, a physician from Cologne, attacked Freud fiercely at a congress in Baden-Baden (May 1906) remarking that Freud's method was immoral. Aschaffenburg set out his position in a September 1906 article.⁴⁷ He first took a stand against Freud's conception of the role of sexuality in the aetiology of neuroses. In contrast to Löwenfeld, he opined that masturbation cannot lead to neurasthenia although there is a connection between the two. He differentiated between masturbation as a deed and the mental excitement linked to it. Masturbation as a deed is a symptom of degeneration, but does not as such lead to neurasthenia. Mental excitement is different: masturbation was, after all, seen as morally improper and

⁴⁶ On the issue of Freud's theories on sexuality in relation to the science of sexuality of his time see: V. Sigusch, "Freud und die Sexualwissenschaft seiner Zeit", in I. Quindeau, V. Sigusch (eds.), *Freud und das Sexuelle. Neue psychoanalytische und sexualwissenschaftliche Perspektiven*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt, New York, 2005, pp.15-35.

⁴⁷ G. Aschaffenburg, "Beziehungen des sexuellen Lebens zur Entstehung von Nerven- und Geisteskrankheiten", in *Münchener Medicinischer Wochenschrift* 1906/37, pp.1793-1798.

gave the masturbator “a feeling of lacking will power”. In other words, it was not the deed that was dangerous but the ideas linked to it – that is to say, the moral consequences. Despite his criticism of Löwenfeld, Aschaffenburg’s position is entirely in line with the authors discussed earlier. He simply could not fathom – particularly with reference to *Studies in Hysteria* – how Freud could defend the idea that it was the repression of masturbation which was the source of neurotic complaints. On the contrary, that kind of repression was a sign of the strength of one’s will. He believed that Freud’s search for the root of neurasthenia and anxiety neurosis in infantile sexuality was, in some cases, defensible. Yet Freud’s method was immoral: he not only interrogated his patients, he also spoke about sexual trauma thereby calling up sexual ideas. From Aschaffenburg’s perspective that was certainly not desirable.⁴⁸

Aschaffenburg included Eugen Bleuler and Carl Gustav Jung, *inter alia*, in his argument. He presented them as sensible psychiatrists who entertained ideas similar to Freud’s, although they did so in a much more balanced way than Freud with his immoral theories and methods. This provoked Jung to defend Freud. Jung, at that time a psychiatrist at the Burghölzli (in Zurich) and Bleuler’s colleague in research into schizophrenia (dementia praecox), had sought contact with Freud in April 1906 and defended him in November against Aschaffenburg’s attack.⁴⁹ According to Jung, Freud’s greatest merit was that he traced hysteria back to psychosexual conflicts, although he does not claim to have investigated every case of hysteria. The point is clear: Jung believed that the genesis of hysteria was not exclusively sexual. As concerns Aschaffenburg’s critique that the exploration of sexual ideas was immoral, Jung explained that this matter cannot be put in general terms. For some patients that kind of exploration is harmful, for others it is not: a pragmatic answer. The pressing question is how Jung arrived at this view. The first point is that Jung read Freud for his ideas on how memories, fantasies and affect are processed and not for his ideas on repression. The pragmatic answer was dubious from the perspective of the theories of resistance, defence and repression. After all, every person has resistance, but does that mean one should not question and explore further? The second point (an extension of the first) is that Jung ignored Freud’s cultural criticism. Freud had serious doubts regarding the repression of drives based on cultural morality. This kind of repression was particularly harmful to the patient. The question thus presents itself whether Freud would have agreed with Jung’s pragmatic position that it is sometimes useful *not* to further investigate sexual ideas. Freud would have probably said that exploration is always better than repression; that is precisely the physician’s task.

⁴⁸ Aschaffenburg repeated his criticism at a 1907 conference in Amsterdam where he proudly announced that he, at least, had forbidden his patients to speak about sexual subjects. E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 2, p.112; H. Stroeken, *Freud in Nederland. Een eeuw psychoanalyse*, Uitgeverij Boom, Amsterdam, 1997, pp.12-13.

⁴⁹ C.G. Jung, *Freud’s Theory of Hysteria: A Reply to Aschaffenburg*, in *Collected Writings 4*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1968, § 1-26.

When one follows the subsequent relationship and debate between Freud and Jung we find that these same “misunderstandings” and differences repeatedly resurface.⁵⁰ That which Freud emphasized (repression and infantile sexuality) were difficult for Jung to accept. Thus, in his June 1907 lecture in Amsterdam Jung summarized Freud’s view on hysteria defining Freud’s use of the term libido as the sexual component of mental life.⁵¹ Small children’s libido is divided amongst all possible sexual possibilities, including perversions. The libido occupies all of these domains, but during the child’s continued development various occupations are “absolved” and normally “the libido concentrates” on valid sexual ends and acts. That which has been liberated is “via sublimation employed” for other purposes. Jung attempted to describe Freud’s theories from *Three Essays*, but if we look closely he detached the libido and sublimation from the erogenous zones and the sexual drives as depicted by Freud. What Freud called inhibition or containment, Jung now called “absolution”. The question is, who is absolving what. We see here every indication that the libido has its own will. After all, it has what Jung will soon call “a volitional character”.⁵² As mechanisms of repression, shame and disgust only play a role at puberty. The same may be true for sense of guilt. The libido basically has its own natural evolution.

Someone who was closer to Freud’s thinking was Karl Abraham, Jung’s assistant at the Burghölzli, who approached Freud in 1907. Abraham adopted Freud’s insights into infantile sexuality, defended and expanded upon them. Abraham’s work on this subject pleased Freud.⁵³ In that same year Abraham wrote an essay connected to Freud’s theories of hysteria in which guilt explicitly appears.⁵⁴ Against the background of Freud’s theories on hysteria, Abraham asked why one child will tell its parents about a sexual experience while another will not. His answer was that children who do not talk about their sexual experiences do so on account of “a sense of their own guilt” regarding the experience. It is not only the “seducer” (in two concrete examples) who is guilty, but the child has the feeling that “he let himself be seduced”. Why would a child let himself be seduced? The answer is “increase of pleasure”, whether as “fore-pleasure” or as “a desire for satisfaction” (a differentiation taken from *Three Essays*). The desire for pleasure is a “secret” that children are desperate to conceal, and only from this can sense of guilt be explained. In this regard, Abraham here is more definitive than Freud. What then

⁵⁰ On this issue see P. Vandermeersch, *Unresolved Questions in the Freud/Jung Debate. On Psychosis, Sexual Identity and Religion*, Leuven University Press, Leuven, 1991.

⁵¹ C.G. Jung, *The Freudian Theory of Hysteria*, in *Collected Writings 4*, § 27-63.

⁵² C.G. Jung, *The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual*, in *Collected Works 4*, §693-744 (§ 693).

⁵³ K. Abraham, “Über die Bedeutung sexueller Jugendtraumen für die Symptomatologie der Dementia Praecox”, in *Psychoanalytische Schriften II*, J. Cremerius (ed.), Psychosozial-Verlag, Gießen, 1999, pp.125-131; S. Freud, K. Abraham, *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue. The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham*, H. Abraham, E. Freud (eds.), Basic Books, New York, 1965, p.1-4.

⁵⁴ K. Abraham, “Das erleiden sexueller Traumen als Form infantiler Sexualbetätigung”, in *Psychoanalytische Schriften II*, pp.167-181.

explains why one child seeks more pleasure than another and permits himself to be seduced? Abraham comes to the conclusion that the libido of children who allow themselves to be seduced is quantitatively abnormally high: these children have an abnormal desire for increase of pleasure and because of that they suffer sexual traumas.⁵⁵ The resulting sense of guilt is unbearable for the child and is split off by consciousness as a “complex” and repressed. Should sometime later an analogous or related experience take place, what has been repressed can return to consciousness. The consequence can then be conversion (hysteria), displacement to compulsive ideas (obsessional neurosis) or, in the case of dementia praecox, displacement to a “delusion of guilt”.⁵⁶ All three are thus “expressions of a sexual feeling of guilt”. The “delusion of guilt” includes a feeling of guilt which was originally part of the sexual pleasure and when this returns to consciousness it is repressed and linked with the “sin” of lacking sincerity. This is closely linked to obsessional neurosis, only the obsessional neurotic turns this delusion of guilt into a compulsive idea and the schizophrenic turns it into a delusional idea.

Freud endorsed Abraham’s ideas about sense guilt with the paradoxical annotation that Abraham’s explanation of an abnormally high libido was probably not correct: the abnormal constitution is peculiar to all children. The difference between one sexual experience and another must be sought in the degree and nature of the auto-erotic.⁵⁷ All in all, Freud was enthusiastic about Abraham’s article which additionally meshed well with Freud’s own interests at that time.

3.5 *Dominated by guilt*

Freud addresses guilt several times in his published work after 1907 beginning with *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices*. It is the first work by Freud in which religion plays a principal part. This is not to say that Freud’s interest in religion is new. He had already demonstrated in *Psychical (or Mental) Treatment* (1.5) that he had an eye for religious phenomena. The subject of that essay was the influence of mental activity on the body and the assertion that a hypnotizer can influence someone via suggestion. The hypnotized person “obeys” the hypnotizer “faithfully”. The terminology, faithful obedience, is deliberate: Freud regarded the work of the modern hypnotizer as an extension of that of the priest or miracle-worker.⁵⁸ The physician works in the tradition of the belief in the power of the word and the possibility of influencing the body via the mind. In addition to this historical kinship, Freud also sees in religious phenomena analogies with contemporary possibilities to influence the will via the body. Just as the “religious

⁵⁵ Idem, p.173.

⁵⁶ Idem, p.175.

⁵⁷ S. Freud, K. Abraham, *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue*, p.3.

⁵⁸ S. Freud, *Psychical (or Mental) Treatment*, pp.289ff.

believer” seeks and possibly finds spiritual salvation at a pilgrimage site, the “religious non-believer” seeks salvation from the physician.

Also in *Psychopathic Characters on the Stage* (1905 or 1906) Freud had dealt with religion. In this short and often unnoticed text he first of all dealt with tragedy (opera, drama) as the staging of suffering through conflict. This gives the audience pleasure – identification with the hero enables the viewer to “blow off steam”. Freud had focused here on *Hamlet*.⁵⁹ Because tragedy “originated out of sacrificial rites” he could write that the “religious drama” is one of the “grand scenes” staging the struggle between “love and duty” in the form of the hero rebelling against God.⁶⁰ This staging of struggle is not only found in religion and drama, but also in culture (man struggling against institutions) and in psychopathology (the conflict between conscious and repressed impulses). There are hence analogous “terrains” staging the same conflict. Next to the issue of analogy, in this article we can detect some ideas Freud will later more explicitly elaborate upon: religion as the “staging” of conflict (*Totem and Taboo*); culture and religion as tragedy (*Civilization and Its Discontents, Moses and Monotheism*).

Historical kinships and analogies were for Freud reason enough to discuss religion in these early essays. With regard to *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices*, there is another reason as well: cultural criticism. The notion that morality and culture can exercise an oppressive influence on sexuality extends to religion as well. Now and then he mentions morality and religion in a single breath. His quest after the origins of morality and the sense of guilt brought him naturally to religion.

In *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices* the analogy of neurotic obsessive actions and religious ceremonies is central.⁶¹ He describes the analogy from the perspective of the obsessive neurosis which consists of small acts, additions and limitations regarding other acts, and assignments. All of these kinds of acts appear meaningless, senseless, not only to others, but also to the obsessive neurotic himself. Characteristic of this practice is, however, the conscientiousness with which it is carried out and the fear that accompanies its omission. It is precisely these two elements that can give the obsessive act the character of a ceremony, a “sacred act”.⁶² Typical of this ceremony is also that it has a private quality: the neurotic can also meet his social obligations without difficulty.

⁵⁹ S. Freud, *Psychopathic Characters on the Stage*, SE VII, pp.305-310.

⁶⁰ Idem, p.306, p.308.

⁶¹ Freud starts his essay with the remark that others have also recognized the analogies between obsessive actions and piety. Indeed, Krafft-Ebing, for example, in his *Psychopathia Sexualis*, had suggested a link between neurasthenia and religious confusion. R. von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, pp.7-8. Havelock Ellis also referred to the analogy between sadism and flagellation. H. Ellis, *Das Geschlechtsgefühl. Eine biologische Studie*, Stuber's Verlag, Würzburg, 1903. Finally, Hellpach had suggested a relation between nervousness and an cultural moral that holds on to outdated religious traditions. W. Hellpach, *Nervosität und Kultur*, Verlag Råde, Berlin, 1903.

⁶² S. Freud, *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices*, SE IX, p.118.

What are the analogies with religious ceremony? Freud named three: the qualms of conscience generated by the omission of the ceremony, the isolation as regards other acts, and the conscientiousness with which the act is carried out.⁶³ There are obviously differences as well: the obsessive act is private, the religious rite is public and communal. The great difference appears to be the senselessness of the obsessive act as compared to the presumed meaningfulness of the rite. Yet that difference is only skin-deep, for the obsessive act does indeed make sense. It appears to be derived from the sexual life of the person and seen this way the act is about a “meaningful” handling of an intimate experience. The point is only that the obsessive neurotic is not conscious of this meaning himself. The obsessive act is thus an expression of unconscious motives and ideas.⁶⁴ This appears to be an important difference from the religious rite, but, Freud thought, average believers are often barely aware of the meaning of the rites in which they engage either.

He then further addressed the nature and origin of the obsessive neurosis and referred to earlier theories. In short, we are dealing with repressed self-reproach (an affect) which returns to consciousness as an empty sense of guilt, but bonds within consciousness with a new idea. In this way the affect (self-reproach) is converted into another emotion, fear or shame for example. Freud put it as follows: “the sufferer from compulsions and prohibitions behaves as if he were dominated by a sense of guilt, of which, however, he knows nothing, so that we must call it an unconscious sense of guilt, in spite of the apparent contradiction in terms”.⁶⁵ This sense of guilt gives rise to expectation anxiety and expectation of doom: the fear that characterizes the obsessive neurotic signifies a fear of punishment if the ceremony is not meticulously performed. Seen this way, the ceremony also acts as a protective measure against punishment. This sense of guilt on the part of the obsessive neurotic has an analogy in the believer who sees himself as a sinner.⁶⁶ Fear of punishment and the use of ceremony as protection are thus results of the sense of guilt.

Where does this sense of guilt come from, however? Its origins lie in “the repression of an instinctual impulse (a component of the sexual instinct)”, a drive which for a time during childhood could be expressed but was then repressed.⁶⁷ The drive leads to a self-reproach which is repressed. Repression includes a reaction formation, conscientiousness, which feels itself constantly under threat by the drives and experiences this as temptation. This is the source of expectation anxiety. The obsessive act is a defence against temptation and protection from expected disaster. Yet the obsessive act is simultaneously also a possible outlet for that which is not absolutely forbidden. Freud here once again drew a parallel with religious

⁶³ *Idem*, p.119.

⁶⁴ *Idem*, p.122.

⁶⁵ *Idem*, p.123.

⁶⁶ *Idem*.

⁶⁷ *Idem*, p.124.

rites: the church wedding ceremony approves a prescribed form of permissible sexual enjoyment while precluding extramarital sexual enjoyment.⁶⁸ Seen in this light the obsessive act (and the religious ceremony) share a compromise character between what is forbidden and permitted: “they always reproduce something of the pleasure which they are designed to prevent”.⁶⁹

Religion, too, appears to repress certain drives, but not, as is the case in neurosis, exclusively sexual ones. In religion we are dealing with the repression of “self-seeking, socially harmful instincts”, in which a sexual component (Freud did not specify which) does indeed play a role.⁷⁰ Just as in neuroses, sense of guilt also plays a prominent role in religion – one speaks of a fear of divine punishment. In both neurosis and religion Freud claimed that this was possibly the result of repression having been successful, yet insufficient. The believer can also backslide into sin and from there develop a need for acts of atonement. This has once again similarities with the character of an obsessive act.

The final similarity Freud mentions is the “displacement” shared by both the obsessive neurotic and the religious rite.⁷¹ In my view, he meant the empty sense of guilt that, once returned to consciousness, bonds with a random idea and can even metamorphose. A trivial detail can in this way become essential to an obsessive act, just as petty religious rituals can become more important than the way of thinking of which they are the expression.

The essential analogy between obsessive acts and rites is thus for Freud in the repression of drives as the basic motive for the most conspicuous similarities: the qualms of conscience caused by omission, the isolation with respect to other acts and the conscientiousness of how the act is carried out. Put another way, experiencing pleasure leads to self-reproach. These two are repressed together. That which is repressed returns as sense of guilt and is transformed into fear, conscientiousness and obsessive acts.

It now appears as if obsessional neurosis is the pathological counterpart of the formation of religion, and religion is simply a universal obsessional neurosis. But with regard to religion, the renunciation of the drives forms the fundament of cultural development.⁷² Renunciation of the drive means that “instinctual pleasure” is partly transferred to the deity. Freud cited by way of example from the Bible: “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord”. This is a citation from Paul’s Epistle to the Romans (12:19b). Paul in turn cites freely from “Moses” (Deut. 32:35-

⁶⁸ Idem, pp.124-125.

⁶⁹ Idem, p.125.

⁷⁰ Idem.

⁷¹ Idem, p.126.

⁷² Idem, p.127.

36).⁷³ For Freud the meaning of this citation is illustrative: God may do what men repress, namely express his vicious, socially dangerous urges. He described that as a liberation and I believe he meant by this that the thought that God may indeed seek revenge can be liberating for those to whom vengeance is not permitted and/or those who do not permit revenge.

For the time being, *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices* was a tentative study of an analogy between obsessive neurosis and religious rites. Freud made no attempt to explain one via the other.

3.6 Cultural morality

Freud's cultural criticism was an extension of his thinking since Carmen, as discussed earlier. This criticism concentrated principally on sexual repression in bourgeois society. At the end of *Three Essays* this criticism appeared once again. In puberty, a conflict between infantile sexuality on the one hand and the curtailment and result of the sexuality determined by counterforces on the other, moral pressure from the presiding culture plays an important role. He then concluded that a neurosis in an advanced culture is more easily effected than in a less advanced one, that is, one characterized by freer sexual development.

Freud's next work in this field after *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices* was "*Civilized*" *Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness* from 1908. He cites extensively from, *inter alia*, Krafft-Ebing and Otto Binswanger.⁷⁴ These authors dealt with the link between modern culture and the prominence of nervous diseases. By means of citations, Freud highlighted what these authors designated as a core link: the stress and pressure on the individual in the struggle for survival. Freud asserted that this explanation was incomplete. After all, these general tendencies cannot explain individual differences amongst neurotics. The most essential link between culture and nervousness is cloaked by general tendencies, namely the injurious repression of sexuality by sexual morality in modern bourgeois society.

What did Freud mean by "cultural sexual morality"? Freud referred to one of Brentano's students, the philosopher Christian von Ehrenfels, who is best known for having laid the groundwork for what would later be known as Gestalt psychology.⁷⁵ Freud referred to Ehrenfels's *Sexualethik* [Sexual Ethics], 1907, whose point of departure was that ethics attempts to be the decisive answer to

⁷³ This sentence has often been presented as a direct citation from Deuteronomy, and hence as a first indication of Freud's fascination with the figure of Moses. It is in fact a citation from a letter by Paul, and hence also expresses another fascination, namely for the figure of Paul, a fascination that somewhat in the shadow of Moses forms a "dark trace" throughout Freud's writings. On this subject see H. Westerink, "The Great Man from Tarsus: Freud on the Apostle Paul", in *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 76 (2007), pp.217-235.

⁷⁴ S. Freud, "*Civilized*" *Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness*, SE IX, pp.184-185.

⁷⁵ Idem, pp.181ff.

moral conflicts and one of these fields of moral conflict is sexuality.⁷⁶ In order to make this conflict clear, he distinguished between a natural sexual morality and a cultural sexual morality. The former is biologically determined and is hereditary, the “constitutive property”, which must be differentiated from “cultural property”.⁷⁷ Natural sexual morality serves reproduction in the battle for existence and is thus characterized by evolution of the species by natural selection and competition between men. Natural, too, was polygyny, that is to say a single man mating with multiple women. Natural urges can thus be objectionable within a culture that sets boundaries; simultaneously culture’s development is in principle within the framework of the natural development of the species. Culture is thereby both a means and an obstacle in evolution. Ehrenfels identified what we have already seen is a characteristic feature of the Viennese bourgeois – the public decency, the respectability which largely disguises or veils natural sexual urges. Behind the respectability it was clear that women were expected to be monogamous, but men apparently lived by a double standard – in public life they were monogamous fathers, but they revealed their true face whenever they wanted to cavort with “immoral women”. Evidently natural morality was not easily repressed and Ehrenfels thus proposed greater openness: strict monogamy must be rejected for it leads to an undesired double moral standard. A serious problem with monogamy is additionally that it makes natural selection impossible, thereby inhibiting the development of the species.⁷⁸

What Freud found in Ehrenfels was a critique of cultural sexual morality from the perspective that man is naturally not geared to wearing a tight straitjacket. This is in accordance with the position that cultural morality represses sexual drives. But Freud missed an important aspect in Ehrenfels’s text: cultural morality also damages the psyche increasing the number of people with nervous illnesses.⁷⁹

After examining these authors, Freud differentiated between neuroses and psychoneuroses (hysteria, obsessional neurosis), which are both caused by the repression of sexual urges.⁸⁰ In this way neuroses and psychoneuroses are in fact analogous phenomena. In addition, in both cases the repression is “progressive”.⁸¹ Individual sexual development changes incrementally from auto-erotic, to a love object under the primacy of the genitals (aimed at reproduction), and repression of all perverse sexual urges.⁸² Analogously to developments in individual development, cultural development sees a line of free expression of sexual urges,

⁷⁶ C. von Ehrenfels, *Sexualethik*, Bergmann Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1907.

⁷⁷ Examples of natural property include body length, muscle strength, intelligence, fantasy. Examples of cultural property include tools, scientific knowledge, language.

⁷⁸ Idem, p.35.

⁷⁹ S. Freud, “Civilized” *Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness*, p.182.

⁸⁰ Idem, p.185. The difference between neurosis and psychoneurosis is the fact that the symptoms of the former are of a toxic nature, whereas the symptoms of the latter are of a psychogenetic order.

⁸¹ Idem, p.187.

⁸² Idem, pp.188-189.

via the repression of sexual urges in the service of reproduction, to a stage in which only legitimate reproduction is permitted (marriage).⁸³ It is with this analogy that Freud was able to implicitly criticise Ehrenfels, Krafft-Ebing and others who emphasized too heavily the natural tendency towards procreation. Infantile sexuality is certainly not directed at reproduction, and neither are perversions or homosexuality.

In the second cultural stage the development of perverse or homosexual impulses can be a source of mental anguish. That is to say, someone with weak sexual desire is still busy with the repression of that urge and does not achieve sublimation.⁸⁴ Someone with strongly perverse impulses either remains perverse or, under the pressure of their upbringing and social demands, manages to repress those tendencies. This repression will eventually fail, however, and be harmful to both the individual and society manifesting itself in psychoneurosis. Indeed, experience shows that every individual has limits as to how far he can accommodate culture's demands. These limits demarcate a quantitative difference between weak and intense impulses. This is why it is problematic that society demands the same sexual behaviour from all of its members. What is possible for one member of any given society may be impossible for another.⁸⁵

All of this takes place within culture's second stage. We now move on to the third stage; in this stage sexual freedom is further curtailed and restricted to marriage. The group of people whose individual constitutions conflict with cultural demands is even larger here. The principle problem area is sexual abstinence before marriage. Our culture actually calls for sublimation, but only a small number of people can achieve this.⁸⁶ The danger of neurosis is much greater here: desire is here excessively strongly repressed, which can often lead to neurotic symptoms. Does marriage then offer sufficient solace? The answer is no. After all, cultural sexual morality also places limits on sexuality within marriage with sex purely in the service of reproduction. Ehrenfels's "double moral standard" provided relief for men, Freud admitted, but woman's fate was absolutely miserable.⁸⁷ Certainly when a woman had a strong moral character – think here of Elisabeth von R. – their feelings of duty will be stronger than their desire for a lover, for example, and they will find refuge in neuroses. So does repression generate more for society than the personal suffering of its members? He did not offer any critique of this utilitarian assessment per se, but put forward that this determination was simply

⁸³ Idem, p.189.

⁸⁴ Sublimation is defined as the capacity to exchange the originally sexual aim for another one, which is no longer sexual but which is psychically related to the first aim. Idem, p.187.

⁸⁵ Idem, pp.189-192.

⁸⁶ Idem, p.193.

⁸⁷ Idem, p.195. A similar analysis of Viennese morality can be found in Stefan Zweig's memories. He writes that Viennese morality was a double morality, repressing sexuality from public life and discourse, but also admitting men a "secret" sexual life, whereas women should always maintain their "holiness" and thus restrain their urges. S. Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern*, pp.96-97, pp.100-101.

difficult to make. He did indeed ascertain that this mental hardship did not make a person stronger or harder, but rather the opposite. The repression of drives usually did not accomplish anything other than the repression itself. The absence of any gain for society is a loss for that society.

Freud was no proponent of the demand for celibacy before marriage. Such an injunction was particularly hard on young women. All in all, he had to conclude that marital bliss suffered under greater cultural demands. It was thus also time for a reconsideration of cultural sexual morality, but by this he did not mean that this task was decisively a medical one. He referred back to Ehrenfels⁸⁸ who had indeed presented it in more general terms in his *Sexual Ethics*, including more openness (less shame), and certainly a return to natural sexual morality, acceptance of that which is not harmful (masturbation and homosexuality), revision of morality and opposition to the “double standard”.⁸⁹

The point of departure in this essay is the analogy between the development of a mature sexuality and the development of a culture when both are based on the repression of drives. Just as in *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices*, Freud did not explain one with the other. The point is that cultural sexual morality can have a negative effect on individuals with weaker mental constitutions. Freud did not yet, however, link the fact that cultural morality can have power over individual lives with identification with authority figures. For the time being, it remained an analogy.

3.7 Hostility toward the father

In his discussion of “cultural” sexual morality, Freud mentioned neither self-reproach nor sense of guilt. But from what we already know of the place and role of these concepts, we may conclude that they played a significant role in the repression of sexuality by culture. After all, we are dealing here with the repression of pleasure based on a feeling of duty. Self-reproach and sense of guilt have a place in the reaction to pleasure and the development of conscientiousness. This role is explicit in Freud’s great case of obsessional neurosis: the Rat Man.⁹⁰ This case can be seen as a summary analysis of Freud’s earlier studies into obsessional neurosis, but also as a case for the first exploratory psychoanalytic studies into religion and culture discussed above. Indeed, the repression of pleasure and relations with

⁸⁸ S. Freud, “Civilized” *Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness*, p.204.

⁸⁹ *Idem*, pp.195ff.

⁹⁰ S. Freud, *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis, SE X*, pp.155-249. On this case see B. Grunberger, “Some Reflections on the Rat Man”, in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 47 (1966), pp.160-168, P. Mahoney, *Freud and the Rat Man*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1986, P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.261-267, R. Künstlicher, “Horror at Pleasure of His Own of which He Himself is Not Aware: The Case of the Rat Man”, in I. Matthis, I. Szecsódy (eds.), *On Freud’s Couch. Seven New Interpretations of Freud’s Case Studies*, Aronson Publishers, New Jersey, London, 1998, pp.127-164; A. Meyhöfer, *Eine Wissenschaft des Träumens*, pp.324-329.

authority (the father) are central. Seen in this light, this case can also be read as a case of “cultural” sexual morality.

Ernst Lanzer, “the Rat Man”, was a twenty-nine-year-old lawyer in therapy with Freud. Since the age of four he had suffered from obsessional ideas chiefly having to do with the fear that something might happen to two people dear to him, his father and a certain lady. (His father, incidentally, had already died.) He also suffered from compulsive impulses, namely the impulse to slit his own throat with a razor, and he forbade himself all kinds of things. When Freud invited him to relate anything that came to his mind, he spoke about a good friend who had supported him when he suffered from his impulses before abruptly switching to a story from his early childhood. He had demonstrated with a certain degree of pleasure an all too eager interest in the body of a governess. An enduring “tormenting curiosity” was the result.⁹¹ The picture which quickly emerged was that of an intelligent man who was sexually active very early. He himself located the beginning of his problems here – the desire to see a naked girl was accompanied by “an uncanny feeling, as though something must happen if I thought such things, and as though I must do all sorts of things to prevent it”.⁹² This child, Freud wrote, was dominated by a desire to look. This obsessive desire was paired with an obsessive fear which was formulated as follows: “When I have the desire to see a woman naked then my father must die”.⁹³ Formulations such as these are typical for obsessional-neurotic thought.

The following psychoanalytic session dealt with the direct cause of why he sought therapeutic help. The patient reported a military exercise in which he participated as a reservist. He hated the lieutenant-colonel “for he was obviously fond of cruelty”.⁹⁴ In the mess he indeed told stories about horrible Chinese methods of torture. Then the patient fell silent and refused to relate the horrible details. Freud pressed him to overcome his resistance and the story then emerged: a criminal could be punished by having a pot full of rats placed upside down on his bottom while being tied down. The rats would then gnaw into... – the patient then became emotional and stopped – ...his anus, Freud supplied. He interpreted the facial expression of his patient as “horror at pleasure of his own of which he himself was unaware”.⁹⁵ The patient then added that when he heard his lieutenant-colonel tell this story he immediately thought this would happen to a woman of whom he was fond. While relating the rest of the story it appeared that the Rat Man was doing all he could, as it were, to ward off his obsessive thoughts. The lieutenant-colonel’s cruelty was also alive within him.

⁹¹ S. Freud, *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*, p.160.

⁹² *Idem*, p.162.

⁹³ *Idem*, p.163.

⁹⁴ *Idem*, p.166.

⁹⁵ *Idem*, p.167.

During a subsequent session the Rat Man spoke about his father and his death. He reproached himself, it appears, for not having been there when he died.⁹⁶ He suspected that his mother and sisters also reproached him for this. At first this caused him no trouble, but after a year and a half it began to torture him. The immediate cause was the death of an aunt. Freud wrote that a layman might think that there is an enormous difference between the cause for his self-reproach (not being at his father's deathbed) and the magnitude, the affect, of the reproach (the self-accusation of being a criminal), but Freud wrote instead that, "sense of guilt is not in itself open to further criticism".⁹⁷ After all, the affect originally belongs to another idea.

What is striking about Freud's interpretation of this story is that he treated self-reproach and sense of guilt as synonyms.⁹⁸ Until this point we have not seen this equivalence made so clearly. He then explained to the Rat Man, and his readers, that his reproach or sense of guilt was the key to a possible cure for his complaints, at least if the self-reproach could be linked to the original idea. The difference between the conscious and the unconscious was translated by the Rat Man, with Freud's approval, as "moral self" versus "evil one".⁹⁹ Freud's assent was understandable, given Meynert and the primary and secondary ego, for example. The Rat Man then himself remarked that he saw himself as a virtuous person, but that during his childhood certain indisputably "evil" things had taken place. Freud was naturally enthusiastic about this "discovery", for after all "evil" in this case was the unconscious and because it is formed by repression in childhood it was also infantile.¹⁰⁰

Freud dug deeper still into the Rat Man's world. This produced a story about falling in love with a girl when he was twelve and his idea that if his father died he might fall even more deeply in love was immediately seized upon by Freud in order to pursue the wish character of the latter thought, particularly because this same thought became recurrent. The Rat Man maintained, however, that he did not wish his father dead.¹⁰¹ Indeed, he still loved him. Freud told him that it was just that intensive love which provided the circumstances in which hate is repressed. Where love is less intense is where hate more quickly surfaces. Freud then chose as an example – extraordinary given Freud's identification with Brutus in *The Interpretation of Dreams* – Brutus's love for Caesar which was not intense enough to repress his hate. When Freud subsequently asked where this hate comes from, he reached the following conclusion after several illuminating conversations with the Rat Man: "the source from which his hostility to his father

⁹⁶ Idem, p.174.

⁹⁷ Idem, pp.175-176.

⁹⁸ Idem, p.176.

⁹⁹ Idem, p.177.

¹⁰⁰ Idem.

¹⁰¹ Idem, p.179.

derived its indestructibility was evidently something in the nature of sensual desires, and in that connection he must have felt his father as in some way or other an interference".¹⁰² He labelled this a conflict between the will or authority of the father and the Rat Man's own amorous wishes.

The analysis of self-reproach and sense of guilt leads back to one's earliest childhood and the conflict between one's own desires and their obstruction by one's father. It is here that Freud located the source of hostility toward one's father. The brief reference to Brutus is telling: the trail of self-reproach leads back to the father and that is precisely what Freud also discovered in his self-analysis. With regard to self-reproach, it is the first thing one notices about the Rat Man case – the analysis of self-reproach is what leads back to the earliest hostility toward one's father.

In line with *The Interpretation of Dreams*, one might now expect Freud to have continued with the theme of hostility toward one's father and love for one's mother. In short, one might expect him to bring up and expand upon the Oedipus complex. Yet that did not happen. His analysis of the Rat Man led to ambivalent and conflicting feelings of love and hate. His analysis led him to the repression of what he in *Three Essays* called a "cruel component of the sexual instinct". In *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices* he also described the repression of a component of sexual instinct but did not further determine which components they might be. However, "cruelty" was discussed: in religion antisocial, for example vengeful, urges are repressed. Where did the Rat Man's sense of guilt come from?

Actually, Freud wrote, there are two conflicts in (the Rat Man's) childhood. The first is a conflict between love objects, such as is expressed when one asks a child, "which do you love most, Daddy or Mummy?"¹⁰³ – or in the case of the Rat Man "father or lady". It is clear that the father is seen as interference in the desire for another object other than the father himself. At first the other object is loved more than the father. Once the father is perceived as a nuisance, that becomes the reason diminished love can become hate. The Rat Man rightly asked in response why his being in love with a certain lady had to be paired with hostility toward his father. There was no reason why being in love should transform love for his father into hostility, was there? Freud then proposed the possibility that hostility towards the father arose in earliest childhood before there was a clear differentiation between a loved and a hated object. In other words, Freud proposed the possibility that sense of guilt had its origins in the period that preceded clear object choices. That brings us to the other childhood conflict.

That other conflict is between the loved and the hated self. Freud saw this conflict clearly in the Rat Man's ambivalent feelings towards his father: he is inclined to both hostility and love towards him. He wished his father dead *and* he admired him. Yet Freud saw this same ambivalence in other of the Rat Man's relationships,

¹⁰² Idem, p.182.

¹⁰³ Idem, p.238.

such as hateful wishes towards the lady with whom he was in love. Hostility was directed not only at those who interfered with his loves, but also against the loved ones themselves. Freud called this ambivalence of feelings simply “doubt”, doubt as an expression of a conflict between love and hate,¹⁰⁴ not as a conflict between love objects. Yet where did this conflict come from now?

In *Three Essays* Freud had already differentiated between sexual object and sexual aim. In fact, the designation of the Rat Man’s two conflicts can be traced back to this differentiation. The love-hate conflict is related to the sexual aim. Freud called sadism (and masochism) one of the deviances from “normal”. The polymorphous perverse character of the drives means that desire can be experienced as cruel. Sadism is a liberation and exaggeration of an aggressive component of the sexual drive. Yet even outside sadism, Freud wrote, sexuality is often found linked to aggression to a certain degree, a tendency to overpower a love object and conquer his/her resistance. The thoughts from *Three Essays* now found resonance in the Rat Man case. In his 1913 *The Disposition to Obsessional Neurosis* Freud made this even more clear than he did here: hysteria and obsessional neurosis can be traced back to a phase of auto-erotism and narcissism “before object-choice has been established”.¹⁰⁵ For the obsessional neurotic this means that they manifest themselves in the “reaction formations against anal-erotic and sadistic impulses”.¹⁰⁶

In the Rat Man case, Freud concluded that in obsessional neuroses love represses hate, but that this hate is in fact a sadistic component of “love” itself. In other words, love and hate have the same origin. This love and hate remain strongly intertwined within the obsessional neurosis – love is completely dedicated to suppressing hate and in the reverse hate restrains love. The compulsive ideas and compulsive affects then also have a compromise character and reveal a combination of love and hate. An example is the Rat Man’s praying.¹⁰⁷ Whenever he prayed to God for protection he compulsively added a denial to his prayer: God, protect me... not. Prayer served to repress and ventilate hate. The compromise character of obsessional thoughts also permitted the Rat Man to experience pleasure in his attempts to repress the cruel ideas.

The Rat Man repressed both his hate and his hostile wishes toward his father. Freud believed that the two conflicts were “not independent of each other, but bound together in pairs”.¹⁰⁸ In fact, in the conflict between love and hate he found a solution in love and hate for and against people. Yet Freud also proposed that

¹⁰⁴ Idem, p.191.

¹⁰⁵ S. Freud, *The Disposition to Obsessional Neurosis. A Contribution to the Problem of Choice of Neurosis*, SE XII, p.318. By this time Freud has already introduced the concept of narcissism as a developmental stage between auto-erotism and object-choice. See chapter 5.

¹⁰⁶ Idem, p.320.

¹⁰⁷ S. Freud, *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*, p.193.

¹⁰⁸ Idem, p.238.

these two conflicts “had no connection whatever with each other, either in their content or in their origin”.¹⁰⁹

The question now is where the sense of guilt comes from. We must return for a moment to chapter one. Freud’s idea in Draft K was that an early, active experience of pleasure caused unpleasure in the form of a self-reproach which was subsequently repressed. The defence consists of a certain conscientiousness. In puberty the repressed reproach can return as an empty sense of guilt which then bonds with other ideas whereby the affect can transform into, for example, anxiety or hypochondria (compulsive ideas or compulsive affects). The counter-reaction consists of an increase of conscientiousness and leads to compulsive behaviour. Freud deliberately reached back to this earlier theory – he began the theoretical part of his case history with a reference to his definition from his 1896 *Further Remarks on the Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*: obsessional ideas are “transformed self-reproaches which have re-emerged from repression and which always relate to some sexual act that was performed with pleasure in childhood”.¹¹⁰ He now deems this position debatable on account of its “unification”. He emphasized more strongly that what neurotics “heap together” as obsessional ideas should in fact be differentiated as “obsessional thinking” expressed in various psychical acts such as wishes, temptations, impulses, reflections, doubts, rules and prohibitions. The obsessional neurotic suffers from various forms of “thinking”. This is strongly expressed, for example, in the doubts an obsessional neurotic has, but also, for example, in the thought that a wish – for good or evil – can come true and must therefore be sworn off.¹¹¹

In his analysis of the Rat Man, Freud linked this “thinking” with the “epistemophilic instinct”.¹¹² During the auto-erotic stage, a strong curiosity about the sexual organs and where children come from can develop.¹¹³ This curiosity does not develop spontaneously, but generally as a hostile reaction to the arrival of siblings. This desire to know is important for it expresses the first interest in others, one in which the others are seen as competition. This curiosity, in which aggression plays a role, can come into conflict with parents who do not tolerate it or are recognized as rivals.¹¹⁴ This is also what happened to the Rat Man when he

¹⁰⁹ Idem.

¹¹⁰ Idem, p.221.

¹¹¹ Idem, pp.232-233.

¹¹² Idem, p.245.

¹¹³ Freud had clearly depicted this in his analysis of Little Hans. S. Freud, *Analysis of a Phobia in a five-year-old Boy*, *SE X*, p.34, pp.60-62, pp.86-87, pp.91-92.

¹¹⁴ Idem, pp.133-135. In *The Disposition to Obsessional Neurosis* Freud argued that the “instinct for knowledge” – the epistemophilic instinct – can be seen as a “sublimated off-shoot of the instinct for mastery exalted into something intellectual”. This is said in the context of discussing the primacy of sadism and anal-erotism in the disposition to neurosis. In other words, the instinct of knowledge is seen as a sublimation of sadistic components of the sexual drive. When this sublimation fails (through frustration, inhibition) the result will be the doubt typical of obsessional “thinking”. S. Freud, *The Disposition to Obsessional Neurosis*, p.324.

was punished by his father for biting a girl.¹¹⁵ What happened here is that his father interfered with the expression of the Rat Man's auto-erotic instincts. The curiosity is auto-erotic by nature, but also expresses the initial interest in other objects. Feelings of love and hate are linked via this epistemophilic instinct to objects and are thus "paired" with another conflict. There are hostile feelings towards the father because he forbids and deals out punishments, but the Rat Man also loved his father, accepted his authority and tried to obey him. The core of the conflict is thus not the love for one object versus hostility towards another but rather centres around wishes and prohibitions, around love and hate and the tension between them.

Analysis of sense of guilt leads back to hostility towards the father. We might think that therein lies the origin of the sense of guilt – the Rat Man felt guilty because of his hostile thoughts towards his father and he repressed these thoughts and the self-reproach that came with them. According to the theories of at least ten years earlier, the consequences were known. Yet things are not quite that simple, for the origins of the obsessional neurosis are not found in the repression of feelings of hate towards people, but in the repression of the sadistic components of sexual drive. Hostility towards the father can be traced back – via the epistemophilic instinct – to this component.

In 1896 Freud formulated obsessional neuroses as transformed self-reproaches which have re-emerged from repression and which always relate to some sexual act that was performed with pleasure in childhood. In *The Disposition to Obsessional Neurosis* Freud criticized this definition again: he proposed that the thought that an obsessional neurosis can be traced back to an activity must definitively be depraved.¹¹⁶ The obsessional neurosis is here seen as a protective measure, a reaction formation against anal-erotic and sadistic impulses. These impulses are directed at objects which, as it were, are perceived as "contrast to the subject's own self". Freud meant siblings and parents.

When does self-reproach develop to oppose this sadistic component? Freud is not clear about this here. A decisive clue is offered in *The Sexual Enlightenment of Children* from 1907.¹¹⁷ Small children express their desire to know, their curiosity regarding the sexual organs and the origin of children frankly. He noted as well that it is understandable that parents do not want to simply smother these urges, but want to answer these childish questions. Should answers not be forthcoming, rebellion against parental authority can occur. Yet what can also happen is that the secrecy around these questions can lead to torturous thoughts and a growing sense of guilt because they – and thus any doubts regarding sexual feelings – remain

¹¹⁵ S. Freud, *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*, pp.206-208.

¹¹⁶ S. Freud, *The Disposition to Obsessional Neurosis*, p.319. Compare also S. Freud, *My Views on the Part played by Sexuality in the Aetiology of the Neuroses*, p.275.

¹¹⁷ S. Freud, *The Sexual Enlightenment of Children*, SE IX.

and may not be expressed.¹¹⁸ (Freud then offered a plea for a liberal educational system.) Self-reproach can thus arise when parents, forbidding and punishing, intervene in the child's sexual curiosity. With regard to the Rat Man, his father's punishment for biting the girl was the condition for the development of a sense of guilt. There was then no discussion of open rebellion against his father's authority. Quite the opposite: the Rat Man loved him deeply and tried to be obedient. What was thus decisive for the development of a sense of guilt in the Rat Man was his father's authority.

In fact, this specific conclusion is a specification of the general train of thoughts in "*Civilized*" *Sexual Morality*. Sexual urges come into conflict with a culture that demands repression. Because Freud saw religion as part of morality and because he strongly emphasized the repressive and stifling influence of morality, one would expect nothing less than a substantial critique of religion. *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices* only goes so far in this regard. Freud did criticize the repressive character of the religious ceremony in so many words, but simultaneously he also referred to the advantage that destructive powers in religion can be ascribed to God thus forestalling actual revenge.¹¹⁹ With regard to religion, Freud could be remarkably mild in this period, milder than he was with bourgeois morality. Examples can be found in his correspondence with the Protestant Pastor Oskar Pfister. Freud clearly indicated that religion offered the possibility of sublimation.¹²⁰ In the discordant world of young people in which Pfister worked, this offered the possibility of using religious belief "to stifle" neuroses. That is a possibility, but Freud immediately added a critical note – religion generally represses sexuality forcefully and judges it a sin. In other words, the problem is not that religious sublimation is absurd, but rather that existing religious traditions contribute to a culture in which neuroses are more prominent than ever before. Yet, in *The Future Prospects of Psychoanalytic Therapy* Freud reported that there was a great increase in neuroses at the time, when the influence of religions decreased. Thus, culture still demanded repression whereas religion offered no better prospect to satisfy desire.¹²¹ People were still sensitive to authority, and submitted to culture's demands. Freud wanted to employ the need for authority for the benefit of psychoanalysis. Therapists may have the possibility and even the duty to conquer resistances, including social ones, and thereby also cooperate on social change and improvement. Culture will not permit that easily, because, Freud

¹¹⁸ Idem, p.137.

¹¹⁹ Amongst others, Susanne Heine has rightfully argued that Freud criticized religion's "excessive" repressive morality, but also valued its capacity to contribute to civilization by demanding renunciation of anti-social drives. S. Heine, "Erkennen und Scham. Sigmund Freuds biblisches Menschenbild", in *Verbum et Ecclesia* 27 (2006/3), pp.869-885.

¹²⁰ S. Freud, O. Pfister, *Psychoanalysis and Faith. The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Oskar Pfister*, H. Meng, E. Freud (eds.), Basic Books, New York, 1963, p.16.

¹²¹ S. Freud, *The Future Prospects of Psycho-Analytic Therapy*, SE XI, p.146.

claimed, “we destroy illusions”.¹²² He did not speak about religion as an illusion, but about the cultural illusion that an edifying, bourgeois civilization can repress sexual urges without causing problems. Culture eventually gets what it wants – repressed urges return to damage people and damage culture, which as a whole can then no longer harbour the illusion that it is superior.

¹²² *Idem*, p.147.

Chapter 4

Applied psychoanalysis

4.1 Introduction

“A knowledge of infantile sexual theories in the shapes they assume in the thoughts of children can be of interest in various ways – even, surprisingly enough, for the elucidation of myths and fairy tales”.¹ This knowledge is indispensable for understanding neuroses. As we saw in the previous chapter, neuroses are indeed rooted in infantile sexuality. This is certainly also true of obsessional neuroses, which became increasingly central to Freud’s work after *The Interpretation of Dreams* and are of primary interest to us because the theme of guilt is linked primarily to these neuroses. Yet there are other directions that can be taken given a knowledge of infantile sexuality, other ways which could be trodden. Freud mentions them briefly: myths and fairy tales, and to these we can add art. In the long run, both obsessional neurosis and myth converge in *Totem and Taboo*.

Freud reveals an interest in myths from the beginning of his self-analysis. We have seen that in December 1897 he wrote to Fliess enthusiastically about a book by Kleinpaul on endopsychic myths. Freud’s interest in mythology remained. Whenever he sought general models and complexes with which to explain his findings he fell back upon myths. It was for this reason that he introduced the Oedipus myth in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Infatuation with one’s mother and hostility toward one’s father are interpreted as general human traits and the myth testifies to this.² Ancient myths thus appear to provide direct access to the deepest levels of psychic life in past and present.

Yet things are not quite that simple: psychoanalytic schemas derived from myth do not have a constant universal or timeless meaning. History reveals increasing repression. Oedipus’s quest to find the cause of Thebes’s misery was not one designed to expose repressed guilt feelings. He was simply ignorant. Thus, on a conscious level the myth illustrates the quest for guilt. With Hamlet, however, guilt feelings are repressed and have formed a conscience whereas this cannot be the case with Oedipus. Freud viewed this as a historical development.

Psychoanalysis is the continuous search for the hidden origin of “an old guilt”. This does justice to the major differences between Oedipus and Hamlet. In short, psychoanalysis is not about demonstrating the same complex over and over again, but about the recognition of constantly changing and shifting individual and even

¹ S. Freud, *The Sexual Theories of Children*, SE IX, pp.209-226 (211).

² Armstrong has argued that Freud’s interpretation of the Oedipus myth is in clear opposition with interpretations of the myth in ancient Greece. Then the myth was understood as a uniquely horrible myth which circumstances could hardly be repeated. It was a paradigmatic myth about disaster, but not a prototypical story about human psychic constellation. R.H. Armstrong, *A Compulsion for Antiquity: Freud and the Ancient World*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2005, p.48.

cultural issues. Thus analysis, not the application of preconceived schemes, is central. This analysis largely consists of breaking through culturally determined (or partly culturally determined) resistance in order to make that which is repressed conscious.

The previous chapters have demonstrated that Freud had an eye for the repressive culture of his day. Freud's study of neuroses circled around the core idea, "that there is repression". When reviewing the development of psychoanalysis in 1914, he also called it fundamental: "The theory of repression is the corner-stone on which the whole structure of psycho-analysis rests".³ In so doing he distanced himself from Jung who deduced individual and collective development from another theoretical conception of the nature of libidinous drives. Freud argued this the other way around: in each case a psychoanalyst must proceed from the symptoms back to their origin. That analysis did not produce well-defined principles, but rather confirmed individual and cultural differences.

We have also seen that Freud portrayed himself as a monomaniac who took paths others had long abandoned. Yet he was certainly not alone in his analyses and critique of bourgeois culture which, given its insistence on repression, produced so many problems. In turn of the century Vienna, bourgeois culture was in fact the subject of intense discussion. Making that which was repressed visible and liberating that which was suppressed were tendencies a younger generation of artists in particular felt very strongly about. Painting was partly determined by symbolism, a trend in which profound connections between a mythic past and the deeper passions were suggested as lying beneath the bourgeois surface. The best-known representative of this movement is Gustav Klimt. In 1897 he established the Vienna Secession, a movement with an aversion to traditional art and with a strong predilection towards giving form to subconscious ideas.⁴

Given this background, it is not strange that Freud and his followers studied art as an expression of unconscious motives.⁵ Thus, in his 1908 study of symbolism in fairy tales, Franz Riklin wrote that it was a concentration of symbol systems (the symbolism of dreams and religion) which sprang from the human psyche.⁶ He defined a symbol as a "sign of something complicated"⁷ and it subsequently appeared that that complication principally consisted of egoistic sexual wishes in which rivalry with and hate of others was also expressed. The symbol expresses

³ S. Freud, *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement*, p.16.

⁴ C. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna*, chapter 5.

⁵ Ernest Jones defines a work of art as a "sublimated manifestation of various thwarted and 'repressed' wishes of which the subject is no longer conscious". E. Jones, "The Oedipus-Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery: Study in Motive", in *The American Journal of Psychology* 21 (1910), pp.72-113 (73). In 1911 this text was published in German as *Das Problem der Hamlet und der Ödipus-Komplex*, Deuticke Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna.

⁶ F. Riklin, *Wunscherfüllung und Symbolik im Märchen*, Hugo Heller & Cie, Vienna, Leipzig, 1908, p.33.

⁷ Idem, p.30.

this, condenses it and simultaneously conceals it.⁸ The symbolists' adage was used as a guide for applied psychoanalytic research and, conversely, psychoanalytic ideas quickly influenced art.⁹

The roots of the interest in myths and passions lie in the Romantic period. It was here that not only artists but, as we shall see, psychoanalysts too, found their heroes. Three figures, and their mutual relationships, must be named here in particular: Schopenhauer, Wagner and Nietzsche. For many artists and thinkers at the turn of the century, these three constituted a prime source of inspiration. Freud could not avoid these men either. He later wrote that he perceived considerable concordance between psychoanalytic findings and the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.¹⁰ With Schopenhauer – as far as he knew his philosophy through texts of his followers – he saw agreement in central themes from his philosophy: the primacy of affects, the major role of sexuality and repression. In this chapter I shall discuss Schopenhauer's influence on Freud; the similarities with Nietzsche I shall deal with in the next chapter. And then there is Wagner. Precisely in the period preceding *Totem and Taboo*, several of his followers published studies of Wagner in the series edited by Freud entitled *Schriften zur angewandten Seelenkunde* [Writings in Applied Psychology]. Freud himself dealt with literature, but not with music (and thus not with Wagner).

In this chapter we shall take a closer look at Freud's interest in applied psychoanalysis. This interest expanded on a path explored by his first followers. In so doing he also clearly came into conflict with his most important follower, Jung. I shall try to show that Freud's first followers adapted central Freudian concepts, in particular the Oedipus complex and projection, in a way that Freud found strange at that time. For him both the Oedipus complex and projection are linked to the sense of guilt, morality and repression. His most personal contribution to applied psychoanalysis is, then, to pay attention to these three core concepts. It was the study of morality and the sense of guilt in constantly changing cultural circumstances and different people that prompted him to much greater cautiousness than his followers, who all too easily applied the Oedipus complex as a universal, timeless scheme with an intrinsic and concrete meaning and stretched the meaning of the term projection. For although he had written in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* that in analogy to paranoia "most modern religions" were nothing but "psychology projected in the external world"¹¹, Freud would soon put in perspective this statement, and in fact abandon this definition

⁸ Idem, pp.30ff.

⁹ A very early example of psychoanalytic influence on art is A. Schnitzler, *Leutnant Gustl*, Fischer, Frankfurt, 1995 (originally published in 1900). Schnitzler wrote this story as an application of Freud's ideas on free association. Freud was quick to notice the resemblances between Schnitzler's work and his own. P. Gay, *Freud*, p.130.

¹⁰ S. Freud, *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*, pp.15-16; S. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, pp.59-60.

¹¹ S. Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, SE VI, p.258.

of religion. *Totem and Taboo* is thus not only Freud's answer to Jung, but also an attempt to create coherence within his terminology: in this way he was able to include the Oedipus complex and projection in his discourse on morality and the sense of guilt. Oedipus and guilt are inseparable.

In *Totem and Taboo* Freud would draw on other people's material – Frazer, Robertson Smith, Darwin, Schopenhauer – more than ever before. The choices Freud made here are notable for two reasons. First was the use of authorities against Jung and the second was the use of authorities for his ideas on morality and the sense of guilt. As far as they are relevant I shall briefly deal with these authors, for it is in Freud's small additions and omissions that we can see his individuality.

4.2 The choices of Freud's followers

Mythology became a central subject in the very first issues of the *Writings in Applied Psychology*. Karl Abraham started the ball rolling with *Traum und Mythos* [Dream and Myth] in 1909. Freud was immediately enthusiastic about this study and was convinced that together they would have the honour “of explaining mythology”.¹² That same year he reported to Jung that he was completely convinced that mythology has the core complex of the neuroses as its central theme.¹³ What exactly he meant by core complex was as yet unclear.

Abraham explicitly links *Dream and Myth* to Freud's publications to that date. He tersely concluded that a heterogeneity of the psyche's products, as charted by Freud, must consequently be regarded as fantasy.¹⁴ He then differentiated between individual and collective fantasies (fairy tales and myths). Abraham sought to compare the two in order to show that myths can be understood as individual psychology (the dream). He consequently relied heavily upon Freud's chapter on typical dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Oedipal desires come into conflict with mature cultural morality, are repressed, but return in our dreams. These desires also find expression in myths.¹⁵

It was Abraham who thus made the Oedipus complex central and that was an important step in the psychoanalytic discussion of mythology. Other psychoanalysts then followed this path. The most sensational publication was Jung's 1909 *Die Bedeutung des Vaters für das Schicksal des Einzelnen* [The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual]. He was the first who – without naming the Oedipus complex – saw the dependence relationship (including identification) of the parents (with the father as the determinative factor) as fundamental for

¹² S. Freud, K. Abraham, *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue*, p.47.

¹³ S. Freud, C.G. Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters. The Correspondence Between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, W. McGuire (ed.), Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1974, 160F.

¹⁴ K. Abraham, *Traum und Mythos. Eine Studie zur Völkerpsychologie*, in *Psychoanalytische Studien zur Charakterbildung und andere Studien*, J. Cremerius (ed.), Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt, 1969, p.263.

¹⁵ Idem, p.269.

culture and neurosis.¹⁶ In the first part of the article, identification as the inhibition of self-realization is explored with the aid of clinical material. In the final pages Jung discusses religion. He clearly goes a step further than Freud's analogy of the obsessional neuroses with religion. Instead Jung believed that Old Testament religion is dominated by the severity of Mosaic Law which keeps it at the level of a compulsive ceremony. A development first seen among the prophets and perfected in Christ signifies complete sublimation: Christ's relationship with God is one of love.¹⁷ We can supplement this by observing that this successfully sublimated religion is no longer dominated by identification, obedience and a sense of guilt. This development is both cultural-historical as well as individual and is, in fact, a question of self-realization, an individual liberation from childhood dependence and submission to parents by their repression. We shall return to this topic, but one thing is of note here: Freud recognized an increase in repression through history while Jung saw increasing personal development and sublimation.

Abraham approached the Oedipus myth from Freud's perspective as laid out in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, that is, dreams are an expression of a childhood wish. Thus myths are a piece of surmounted infantile mental life. They comprise (in veiled form) a people's childhood desires.¹⁸ These childhood desires are characterized by egoism and fantasies of grandeur. This is also characteristic of myth: every nation wants to believe it was created by the most powerful god and wants to identify with that god. Fantasies of grandeur are "projected upon heaven".¹⁹ Another similarity between dream and myth is censorship, the veiling of the wish.

Abraham discussed the sense of guilt within the framework of the veiling of wishes. He did so via a comparison of the Prometheus myth with Moses as the bringer of the "fiery" word.²⁰ Moses is not only his God's servant in the "Moses myth", but also a man who comes into conflict with God. He is severely punished because he struck a rock with his staff (symbol of divine power/fire) from which

¹⁶ C.G. Jung, *The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual*, in *Collected Writings* 4, §693-744. On this text see P. Vandermeersch, *Unresolved Questions in the Freud/Jung Debate*, pp.157-161.

¹⁷ C.G. Jung, *The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual*, §738.

¹⁸ K. Abraham, *Traum und Mythos*, p.291.

¹⁹ Idem, p.295.

²⁰ Idem, pp.301ff. The comparison of Prometheus and Moses was first made by the founding father of folk-psychology, Heymann Steinthal. The decorum for this comparison is a 19th-century discussion on the question whether there is a typical Aryan mythology that makes a comparative study of mythological motives found in European and Indian mythology possible. Steinthal believed that the Semitic people also had a pre-monotheistic mythology comparable to Aryan mythology. The comparison between Prometheus and Moses is taken up by Abraham. Jung also elaborates on the Prometheus myth in *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido*. I have argued elsewhere that we can see the influence of this comparison between Prometheus and Moses in two of Freud's late writings, *The Acquisition and Control of Fire* and *Moses and Monotheism*. H. Westerink, "Zum Verhältnis von Psychoanalyse und Mythologie. Die Einfluß Heymann Steinthals Völkerpsychologie auf die angewandte Psychoanalyse", in *Psyche. Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse und ihre Anwendungen*, 62 (2008/3), pp.290-311.

water then flowed. By so doing he disobeyed his God. Abraham thought that we are dealing here with a displacement: Moses is no longer the robber of divine fire (or water), but only guilty of hitting a rock. Abraham saw here an analogy with obsessional neuroses in which self-reproach, whose origin lay in a sexual activity, shifts to conscientiousness regarding something insignificant.²¹

Abraham did not share the general opinion of his day, that myths were the expression of philosophical, religious ideas. Just as it cannot be assumed that children are born with an altruistic ethic, it cannot be assumed that prehistoric peoples (and primitive cultures) had philosophical ideas which they symbolized in myths. Ethics is the result of a long history of repression down to the present day.²² Abraham's Freudian point of view stands in contrast to the vision Jung would develop, a vision already visible in *The Significance of the Father*: myths are indeed expressions of fundamental ideas. Abraham found this unsatisfactory; it offered no insight into motives, including repression of feelings of guilt, for the origin of myths. Whatever is valid for myths is also valid for religion generally: men originally identified with gods, but via a long process of repression within monotheism men became subordinate to a heavenly father. Yet this belief also expressed a wish, a wish "projected" onto heaven: God as caretaker.²³

In Otto Rank's *Der Mythos von der Geburt des Helden* [The Myth of the Birth of the Hero], 1909, it appears that Rank wanted to view myths as the expression of fundamental ideas and impressions, but he followed Abraham in seeing them as partial wish fulfilments. In general, myths primarily express fantasies and only a secondary processing of these is "projected onto heaven".²⁴ That projection is caused, Rank claimed, by desires and as a defence against hostile feelings toward one's father.

Rank focused on myths regarding the birth of a hero. Using a comparative analysis of the tales of the birth of various heroes,²⁵ Rank concluded that disturbed relationships with one's parents is central and that the cause of this must be sought in the hero's character. Birth myths are thus about the hero's character in relation to his family and that is the point where Freud comes in. The link to psychoanalysis is made by a contribution by Freud himself which is known as *Family Romances*. This piece is essentially about the detachment of the growing individual from parental authority.²⁶ For the child, parents are authority and the source of everything to which belief is attached. Yet, when the child compares them with other parents, for example, he begins to doubt his own parents' authority. Sexual rivalry plays

²¹ K. Abraham, *Traum und Mythos*, pp.303-304.

²² Idem, p.318.

²³ Idem, p.320.

²⁴ O. Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero, and other Writings*, P. Freund (ed.), Vintage Books, New York, 1959, p.10.

²⁵ Among the heroes Rank analysed we find Moses, Oedipus, Heracles, Zarathustra, Jesus, Siegfried and Lohengrin.

²⁶ Idem, pp.67-71. Also, S. Freud, *Family Romances*, SE IX, pp.237-241.

an important role in this process; the child feels he is not receiving the full love to which he feels he is entitled, not because he must share his mother with his father, but because he must share his parents with his siblings. This is how hostile feelings towards both parents arise, the beginning of alienation. Yet, in adult dream life the child's "overvaluation" of his parents survives. Given the fact that Rank addresses the Oedipus myth, it is of note that Freud does not even mention it. Projection is not discussed either.

Rank pursued this further with an elaboration of the analogy between the child's fantasy and the general character of the hero myth. He described the projection mechanism as a "reversal of the relation", certainly when the child's hostility towards the father appears inverted in the myth: the father is hostile towards the child.²⁷ This inversion stems from the desire for justification of the child's hostile feelings.

Freud himself published a study on Leonardo da Vinci in *Writings in Applied Psychology*. In this study Freud wrote about Leonardo's desire for knowledge as a capacity for sublimation, a desire, he maintained, which was particularly profound.²⁸ This desire for knowledge flowers when a child experiences the presence of siblings as a threat to his own interests. The question then presents itself: where did these children come from? This question leads to the first exploration of sexuality. Because this desire for knowledge is linked to sexuality, the chance is high that they are repressed or curbed together. If this happens, it is referred to as a compulsive neurotic check. He named disgust and shame as the mechanisms of repression and added as a third a curb from a religious way of thinking.²⁹ It is, however, also possible that the desire for knowledge is sublimated: the libido (or sexual drive) is then not repressed, but directed to a higher goal, intellectual work. Freud then also suggested how Leonardo's sublimation was able to come about. He believed that as a child Leonardo desired his mother and it was thus also inevitable that he too would want to take over his father's place.³⁰ This implies both identification and hostility. After all, "to take someone's place" means "to be as he is", but it also means "removing the other from that place". Yet Leonardo was raised initially without a father: his taking over that place occurred without hostile feelings. Freud then speculated for a while on the question as to what would have happened to him had his father been present and been a figure of authority. Freud believed that had that been the case, it would have resulted in the fate which so many experience: he would have been religious and under the power of a strict, dogmatic religion.³¹ The idea behind this is that "a personal God

²⁷ O. Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, p.78.

²⁸ S. Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, SE XI, pp.77ff.

²⁹ Idem, p.79.

³⁰ Idem, p.120.

³¹ Idem, p.123.

is, psychologically, nothing other than an exalted father”.³² Religiosity is rooted in childhood helplessness and the need for protection, protection which is first provided by the parents and is later ascribed to a god. He calls this development not projection, but sublimation.³³

Sublimation is also the subject of Oskar Pfister’s analysis of the 18th-century Pietist Zinzendorf which appeared that same year.³⁴ Freud was enthusiastic about Pfister’s study, noting that Pfister handled the sublimation of the libido somewhat formally.³⁵ Oskar Pfister, a liberal Reformed Protestant, also did his best to provide a picture of his subject and portrayed Count Zinzendorf as a tragic figure, as are so many neurotics in the history of religious morality. When describing the course of Zinzendorf’s life he placed particular emphasis on the repression of aggressive sexual desire, a repression which was in agreement with orthodox religious ethics. However Zinzendorf’s piety would be strongly coloured by these repressed desires. It was a piety that could be called a failed sublimation (a failed desexualization); a piety characterized by resistance and unstable control over sexual desire, but also by compensation for its loss. Zinzendorf’s piety, Pfister believed, was thus strongly sexualized. He also called this the projection of primary eroticism (infantile sexuality) onto a religious love object.³⁶ Thus we see here how Pfister merged sublimation and projection and, in fact, made them synonymous. Freud always kept projection and sublimation apart because, *inter alia*, sublimation is not linked to a sense of guilt, as with Leonardo.

In his study of Wagner Rank reflects on the idealization of the hero.³⁷ His analysis of the relationships and motives in the opera *Lohengrin* and Wagner’s repeated love triangles (two men and a single woman) brought the Oedipus complex to the fore. His version of this complex is consistent with that of Max Graf, who in 1911 also published a study of Wagner:³⁸ there is desire for the mother and there is subsequent hate of the father who stands in the way. In the fantasy the father then has “the traits of the own ego”, that is to say, “the own idealized personality”.³⁹

³² Idem.

³³ “The almighty and just God, and kindly Nature, appear to us as grand sublimations of father and mother, or rather as revivals and restorations of the young child’s ideas of them.” Idem. Here we find in a nutshell the two elements of the God-image that Freud will elaborate on in his texts on religion: the almighty and just God will be the subject in *Totem and Taboo*. Religion as originating from helplessness and the need for care (“kindly Nature”) is the subject of *The Future of an Illusion*.

³⁴ O. Pfister, *Die Frömmigkeit des Grafen Ludwig von Zinzendorf. Ein psychoanalytischer Beitrag zur Kenntnis der religiösen Sublimierungsprozesse und zur Erklärung der Pietismus*, Deuticke Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna, 1910, p.110.

³⁵ S. Freud, O. Pfister, *Psychoanalysis and Faith*, p.41.

³⁶ O. Pfister, *Die Frömmigkeit des Grafen Ludwig von Zinzendorf*, p.104.

³⁷ O. Rank, *Die Lohengrinsage. Ein Beitrag zu ihrer Motivgestaltung und Deutung*, Deuticke Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna, 1911.

³⁸ M. Graf, *Richard Wagner im “Fliegenden Holländer”*. *Ein Beitrag zur Psychologie künstlerisches Schaffens*, Deuticke Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna, 1911.

³⁹ O. Rank, *Die Lohengrinsage*, p.94.

Rank referred to Freud's text on the Family Romance, but where Freud identified the origin of rivalry and a feeling of mistrust as being linked to siblings, this link is here broken. In addition, Freud did not call the elevation of the father projection and Rank did. That is to say, when he wrote about Wagner's own contribution to the conversion of the Lohengrin myth, he called Wagner's addition "projections of inner psychic contents and developments onto the hero".⁴⁰ This projection is the mechanism by which identification is effected by Wagner with Lohengrin.

A study by Jones of Hamlet and the Oedipus complex appeared in 1911 and clearly matched Freud's thoughts as laid out in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. He regarded Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as the key to understanding not only his work but also his character. Freud linked Hamlet's doubt (about whether to take revenge) with Hamlet's sense of guilt. Hamlet has misgivings, for his uncle's deed is his own deepest wish: to kill his father and marry his mother. By murdering his uncle he can definitely take his father's place, but it is this very thought that is in conflict with his conscience: "his conscience is his unconscious sense of guilt".⁴¹ This is central for Freud and Jones adhered to it when he traced the doubt to a tortured conscience.⁴² The basis of that conscience is an unconscious cause. Here Jones turned to Freud and his views on repression. Those thoughts that generally conflict with cultural morality are repressed and they are the natural instincts, particularly sexual ones. In the search for the origin of repression Jones reached the conclusion that Hamlet nursed the cruel, incestuous wish to take his father's place, a wish which was powerfully repressed and, under the influence of shame and a sense of guilt, was completely purged from his memory. The outstanding illustration of this early relationship between son and parents (hostile wishes against the father are perceived as interfering with the desired affectionate relationship with the mother) is the Oedipus myth.⁴³ Underlying Hamlet's doubt is the Oedipus complex.

It is tempting to say that Jones's study was nothing more than an expansive footnote to *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Yet there are important differences in the details. Jones included the theme of incest: Hamlet repressed not only revenge, but also incestuous desires. Freud principally emphasized sibling jealousy which is passed on to the parental relationships. Drawing on Abraham and Rank, Jones also proposed that the Oedipus complex is a general, human complex which is repressed. This conclusion meant that little stood in the way of a general application of the Oedipus complex. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud was more careful. Let us remind ourselves that Freud approached *Hamlet* and *Oedipus Rex* via his theory of repression and relied upon Meynert's primary and secondary egos. Over time egoistic drives are increasingly repressed by morality. Freud endorsed this idea in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. What is visible with Oedipus is repressed in Hamlet

⁴⁰ Idem, pp.131-132.

⁴¹ S. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, p.273.

⁴² E. Jones, *The Oedipus-Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery*, p.84.

⁴³ Idem, pp.97ff.

by the progress of repression in the inner life of humanity.⁴⁴ Thus he emphasized the fate of the Oedipus complex in relation to an increasingly repressive culture. By contrast, Jones emphasized the continuity between Oedipus and Hamlet.

In 1911 Karl Abraham published a psychoanalytic biography of the late nineteenth-century painter Giovanni Segantini, a forerunner of the Vienna Secession. When he wrote about Segantini's aggressive desires he raised the issue of the obsessional neurotic's sense of guilt.⁴⁵ The obsessional neurotic has repressed his hate, a hate which manifested itself in fantasies of loved one's deaths that give rise to feelings of satisfaction. Yet the effect of this process is a feeling of guilt about these impermissible fantasies and feelings, certainly when the beloved person later does actually die. Attached to this feeling of guilt is the resolution "to make amends". "Remembering the loved one is only accomplished with effusive love or an attempt was made to banish the actual death from consciousness and to bring the dead back to life in fantasy.

Although Freud only mentioned Adolf Storfer's study of patricide once in *Totem and Taboo*, this work deserves our (brief) attention.⁴⁶ After all, this study made a direct connection between Freud's search for the "origin of morality" and patricide. The opening sentences set the tone: "The primitive individual does not create an ethics for himself and no ethics is created for him; he experiences pleasure and unpleasure within certain limits which are determined by a natural check of the urges; values such as good and evil only arise via relations with others." Storfer described this in Hobbesian terms: the battle of everyone against everyone is exchanged for primitive communities at the cost of personal freedom, but with a greater chance of satisfying one's needs. The first communities, starting with families, were protected by shared religious beliefs and a primitive jurisprudence. Storfer relied here on Freud's analysis of the analogy of obsessional practice and religious ceremony: cultural development began with the abandonment of direct satisfaction of individual urges. The goal of religion is to repress socially damaging urges. Yet that is not its only goal: religious myths, for example, are also a focal point for repressed wishes and fantasies, unconscious witness of an entire people.⁴⁷ Myths and religions are not only characterized by a ban on socially damaging tendencies, but a "transfer" of that which is harmful "to the surface", a projection (with a reference to Schopenhauer) of the "will in the outside world".⁴⁸ After the battle of everyone against everyone, in the most primitive communities a distinction was made between permissible and forbidden murder. It was permissible to kill strangers as well as economic and sexual rivals.

⁴⁴ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE IV, p.264.

⁴⁵ K. Abraham, *Giovanni Segantini. Ein psychoanalytischer Versuch*, in *Psychoanalytische Studien. Band II*, p.279.

⁴⁶ A. Storfer, *Zur Sonderstellung des Vätermordes. Eine rechtsgeschichtliche und völkerpsychologische Studie*, Deuticke Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna, 1911.

⁴⁷ Idem, p.5.

⁴⁸ Idem, p.2.

It was forbidden to murder one's father, the leader of the community. In order to support this idea, Storfer then built upon the central idea in *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices*: there is an analogy between the development of the individual and that of humanity. Primitives are humanity in its childhood phase. Rivalry (with strangers and the permissibility of killing them) is also the original motive behind patricide. Primitive man is an Oedipus. Storfer then called upon Freud and his followers who, he believed, made the sons' hostility toward their fathers *the* psychoanalytic paradigm. The rivalry concerns the most important economic and sexual property: the mother. Thus patricide is rooted in an incest wish. In religions these wishes are repressed and "projected onto heaven".⁴⁹

In this palaeontology of ethics, a general tendency is formulated most clearly in the pages of the *Writings in Applied Psychology*: the Oedipus complex is central to Freudian psychoanalysis. For Storfer that was a concrete historical fact, as concrete as the Oedipus complex in every person's childhood.

Storfer reached a conclusion which, in the context of the *Writings in Applied Psychology*, was indeed forceful: the Oedipus complex was *the* paradigm and projection appeared to be *the* way in which it was processed in mythology and religion. It is naturally striking that in this period Freud wrote hardly anything on the Oedipus complex and projection in their mutual relationship. After *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud's attention turned again to repression and specifically the obsessional neuroses. He followed anew the trail of the sense of guilt and self-reproach in the Rat Man case, but not in order to demonstrate that the Oedipus complex was the source of the sense of guilt. It is notable that Freud's followers did make the Oedipus complex central, thereby focusing completely on the love triangle relationship of father-mother-son. This leads us to another central theme: incest desires. In Freud's students' studies this plays a much greater role than in Freud's own writings of this period. Although the Rat Man did experience hostile feelings towards his father, this was not because he was in love with his mother.

There is yet another remarkable shift: Freud treated myth as a veiled wish and in the case of the Rat Man he emphatically pointed out that the sense of guilt should not be reduced to a fact, but principally to a wish, a fantasy that had been thwarted. Last in the series of followers I have described here, Storfer treated the Oedipus complex and the rivalry with and hostility towards the father not as a veiled wish or fantasy, but as historical fact.

Also remarkable is the presence of the term projection in these studies by Freud's followers. Until that time the term had been principally used to describe a mechanism in paranoia. Freud's followers, however, employed the term in a much broader sense. Projection became the shift upwards "onto heaven", for example in formulae like "whatever I don't like a god does in my name" and "what I want to be/have, that is/has my god". Thus that to which one does not have direct access

⁴⁹ Idem, p.14.

or is forbidden is ascribed to another (hero or god). Via the detour of identification with the hero/god the forbidden can be experienced without a sense of guilt.

As we will see, in *Totem and Taboo* Freud tried to create terminological order, thereby creating distance from Jung and simultaneously attempting to convince his other followers. The analysis of the sense of guilt and morality played a crucial role in this. He continued to search for their roots and in addition he returned the Oedipus complex and projection to their place in the analysis of the sense of guilt and morality.

4.3 A single principle

Freud worked on *Totem and Taboo* for two years and it appeared in four parts in 1912 and 1913 in the newly established journal *Imago*, once again a journal for applied psychoanalysis. Each of the four parts has its own character, which is partly determined by the debate Freud was conducting with others. The second and third parts are particularly critical of Wilhelm Wundt, but already reveal the contours of his conflict with Jung. In particular the final part of *Totem and Taboo* was written in reaction to Jung's *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido*.⁵⁰

In 1909 he had written to Jung about the study of mythology, which seemed promising and should be “conquered”.⁵¹ When Freud read the first part of Jung's book in 1911 he was still largely positive – with reservations.⁵² Freud was happy that Jung appreciated that the Oedipus complex was at the root of religious feelings.⁵³ Indeed, Jung's book begins where Freud's other followers had already begun: Freud's dream interpretation and discovery of the Oedipus complex. Nothing seemed to be wrong, but in the spring of 1912 the tone of their correspondence hardened and Jung stated that the second half of his study was a declaration of independence.⁵⁴ The second part of *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido* appeared almost simultaneously with the first part of *Totem and Taboo*. Jung firstly criticized Freud's ideas regarding the incest prohibition which he thought was not put into place because real incest was desired, but was a secondary emanation, a symbol of the indeterminable fear which binds with infantile material.⁵⁵ A fundamental point of criticism was made against Freud's drive theory and his

⁵⁰ In the English translation the full title is: *Psychology of the Unconscious. A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido. A Contribution to the History of Evolution of Thought*, first edited in 1916. To avoid confusion with another book by Jung also bearing the title *The Psychology of the Unconscious* I will refer to the former using the subtitle that is the actual translation of the original German text *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*.

⁵¹ S. Freud, C.G. Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters*, 158F, 160F.

⁵² Idem, 280F.

⁵³ Idem, 270F.

⁵⁴ Idem, 303J, 311F.

⁵⁵ Idem, 315J.

differentiation of sexual and ego drives as well as against his theory of the partial drives which are involved in the earliest developmental stages to differentiate body parts. Jung was searching for an unambiguous essential principle. Behind the various drives he saw a fundamental life drive: the primal libido, which he equated with Schopenhauer's will (see further).⁵⁶ A natural developmental process subsequently takes care of the differentiations which Freud had identified. The introduction of the primal libido thus automatically also meant a broadening of Freud's libido, as regards desexualization.⁵⁷ The libido is a life force and the sexual drive is only one of its later emanations.

In the first part of *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido* Jung kept closely to Abraham's *Dream and Myth* in particular and defended the idea that dreams and myths were analogous phenomena. He cited Abraham's observation that myths are the expression of the infantile mental life of a people and dreams were individual myths.⁵⁸ Yet Jung produced a different exegesis of this idea (from Abraham and Freud). The kinship of myth with dream led Jung to conclude that the soul possesses a historical stratification and that later introversion or regression can permit older layers to resurface. He put forward the idea that this archaic material sheds new light on individual psychology. These ideas meant that the human spirit could at bottom only be known via folk-psychology, the science of cultural development and history.⁵⁹ Returning to the other Freudians (Abraham, Riklin, Rank and Jones), Jung saw clear agreement between dream/fantasy material and ancient myths. He concluded from this that fantasy was an expression of the deepest, archaic layer in man.⁶⁰ Fantasy was consequently clearly distinct from logical, directed thought. That directed thought is in the service of dealing with reality.⁶¹

The difference between fantasy and logical thought appears to match Freud's differentiation between the pleasure principle and the reality principle about which he wrote in *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning* (1911). The human mind fundamentally works according to the pleasure-unpleasure principle without taking reality into account; man's relation with reality is not

⁵⁶ Jung's critique on the distinction between sexual drives and ego drives is based on his reading of Freud's Schreber case study. Here Freud had argued that paranoia is characterized by a withdrawal of the libido from reality which would explain Schreber's loss of sense of reality. He had then raised the question of whether this libidinous decathexis should be limited to the sexual drives only. Jung in his turn reasoned that in some cases the withdrawal of libido included the ego drives. Consequently, the distinction between sexual drives and ego drives could not be maintained. On this issue see P. Vandermeersch, *Unresolved Questions in the Freud/Jung Debate*, pp.226ff.

⁵⁷ Compare S. Freud, C.G. Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters*, 286F.

⁵⁸ C.G. Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious. A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido. A Contribution to the History of Evolution of Thought*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1991, p.27.

⁵⁹ Idem, p.35.

⁶⁰ Idem, p.32.

⁶¹ Idem, p.13, p.20.

determined by sheer perception of reality, but is organized by the libido.⁶² The principle seeks satisfaction and only if that fails is the person forced to seek satisfaction in reality beyond himself. Logical thinking is an attempt to come to grips with reality thereby making satisfaction possible. When the pleasure-ego wants something, the reality-ego makes itself “useful”. Thus the reality principle services the pleasure principle.⁶³ This model can be found in religion, science or the arts. According to Freud, religions demand curtailment of pleasure and have always impressed upon their faithful a surrogate satisfaction: the curtailment of pleasure here is rewarded in the hereafter. Yet, Freud wrote, that is an empty promise; only science, the terrain of thought, can satisfy the pleasure principle via the reality principle.⁶⁴ This perspective had consequences for Freud’s thoughts on the sense of guilt. The moment at which the pleasure principle becomes bogged down and the libido development is checked is decisive for the eventual formation of a specific neurosis. Typical of repression is that it equates reality of thought with external actuality.⁶⁵ This is the reason why the sense of guilt can be very powerful, even without there ever being any actual guilt. To illustrate this he supplied a short, veiled autobiographical report of a feeling of guilt in a man who had cared lovingly for his sick father yet was nevertheless full of self-reproach because he unconsciously wished his father dead. The nature of feelings of guilt is evidence for Freud’s being correct, that a normal development from pleasure-ego into reality-ego can be disturbed when forbidden externally and encroached upon in a limited fashion.

Jung took another position: logical thinking that serves conformation to reality should be clearly distinguished from fantasy that not only “sets free subjective wishes” but is also seen as a gate towards wisdom expressed in mythology and religion.⁶⁶ Fantasy is thus defined here broadly. Religious and mythical ideas also have a place here. In this connection Jung also addressed projection: religion is in essence a systematic organization designed to process unconscious conflicts in and the accumulation of libido via projection to the external world.⁶⁷ “The conscious projection towards which the Christian education aims, offers, therefore, a double benefit”: solving a conflict (actual sin is forgiven and atoned for) and transfer of a personal burden to God.⁶⁸ For Jung, Christianity is thus a useful institution.

⁶² P. Vandermeersch, *Unresolved Questions in the Freud/Jung Debate*, p.218.

⁶³ S. Freud, *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning*, p.223. [*Le principe de réalité*] forme couple avec le principe de plaisir qu’il modifie: dans la mesure où il réussit à s’imposer comme principe régulateur, la recherche de la satisfaction ne s’effectue plus par les voies les plus courtes, mais elle emprunte des détours et ajourne son résultat en fonction des conditions imposées par le monde extérieur. J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, p.336.

⁶⁴ S. Freud, *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning*, p.223.

⁶⁵ Idem, p.225.

⁶⁶ C.G. Jung, *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido*, p.20, p.22.

⁶⁷ Idem, pp.63-64.

⁶⁸ Idem, pp.64-65.

Freud's critique of the first part of *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido* was that Jung thought too much like a Christian and we can understand immediately why: for Freud religion and morality were both repressive agencies while for Jung religion was different from morality and the first is positively defined as a possibility for the processing of desire.⁶⁹ In the meantime, Jung also defined religion as the product of projection, as the "unconscious recasting of the erotic into something religious".⁷⁰ It is a projection which does not call forth moral obligation. Jung also called this projection mechanism sublimation, that is, "the process of transformation of the primal libido" into "associated functions".⁷¹

For Jung religion was part of an evolutionary process that was repeated in every individual development. And according to Jung that is precisely the reason why religions exist and repeatedly arise. For Freud, religions were cultural information which changed over time, intervened in a specific way in an individual's search for pleasure and thereby impacted on individuals differently. Religions evolve and do so within a complete development of culture, but what is missing in Freud is the idea of a positive, systematic development from a single principle. Evolution does not take place without periods of decline, reaction or restoration. According to Freud, it was precisely in these tendencies that morality and religion show their true repressive face.

Jung and Freud's styles also differ considerably. *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido* is a toppled bookcase full of philosophical, religious anecdotes in combination with mythic texts, ideas and dreams which are employed in order to show that the same thoughts and mechanisms return again and again under different guises. Jung regularly cited Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and I believe that this became an important source for Freud's increasing interest in these two figures. We shall see in *Totem and Taboo* how Freud referred to Schopenhauer to validate his ideas. Yet Freud pulled down a different bookcase, one full of anthropological material and psychoanalytic cases. It is concrete material which permits us to see both agreement as well as peculiar differences. The choice of material is also evidence of Freud's resistance to Jung.

In *Totem and Taboo* we find the observation that we "are all miserable sinners".⁷² From Freud's perspective, Jung did not understand these sins. Sense of guilt comes from unconscious, hostile desires. In the Rat Man case the sadistic desires that Freud had partially exposed in *Three Essays* were clearly present. Hostile desires are fundamental for the creation and comprehension of neuroses. With Jung it

⁶⁹ On Freudian thought Jung writes: "The stumbling block is the unhappy combination of religion and morality". Idem, p.74.

⁷⁰ Idem, p.72. That which is projected Jung called the father and mother imago. The father and mother are the first love objects of daughters and sons. The image of the parents is later projected creating images of God: "the divinity is nothing else than a projected complex of representation"; "the religious instinct feeds upon the incestuous libido of the infantile period". Idem, p.61.

⁷¹ Idem, p.133.

⁷² S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.72.

appeared that sins were linked with an unhappy relationship between person and reality, a conflict in which religion or fantasy could offer solace. Jung's theories of the primal libido repudiated the existence of fundamental, sadistic hostile wishes. Guilt feelings thus played hardly any role to speak of. They were ultimately a secondary phenomenon, one which additionally did not appear to be a burden, but rather to be liberating: whenever the libido has its normal development blocked – Jung used the image of a mountain climber who encounters a steep rock wall in his path – it switches to self-criticism for failing. After all, there is a tension between duty (development) and a need for security and safety. Self-criticism, which can arise as an expression of this tension, is subsequently employed in order to develop a new plan in order to reach the goal anyway.⁷³ Self-criticism is thus useful, just as religion can also be useful when it is able to identify sin and offer forgiveness.

This entire issue is the core of *Totem and Taboo*: not the necessary development from a single point, but the ambivalence of feelings; not a world of thought or dealing with reality as the point of departure, but unconscious hostile impulses; not religion as projection, but the study of sense of guilt in order to gain insight into the human mind in relation to culture.

4.4 The prohibition behind the imperative

Freud wrote to Jung saying they would conquer mythology, but what did he mean by that? Was it his intention to explain mythology psychoanalytically? The answer to this question can be found in his earlier interest in culture and religion. Freud began his psychoanalytic career as the discoverer of repression. *Three Essays* supplied the answer to what was repressed. Naturally the other main question was how did repression come about? He quickly discovered that cultural and religious morality play an important role here. He also thought that this repression had gradually increased over the course of history, albeit each time in a new guise. In Vienna Freud saw the consequences and evidence of this: many people succumbed to the pressure of the high cost of repression. It was thus based on his clinical experience that he went in search of the origin of the repressed and the repressive. The path Freud followed in his self-analysis was that of the sense of guilt; he was looking for “an ancient guilt”. His analysis of the Rat Man followed the same logic. What he hoped to find was the source of morality, religion and the sense of guilt. That was the approach – to look for an origin designed for contemporary application. The question was not so much, “How do I explain religion or morality?”, but “How must I understand the interplay of psyche and culture or morality?” This question has two dimensions: the first deals with the influence of cultural and religious morality on the individual; the second is the question of

⁷³ This is expressed in for example C.G. Jung, *The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, in *Collected Works 4*, §380-381.

the culture itself – which developments and shifts have arisen within the culture?

Freud indicates this precisely in his foreword to *Totem and Taboo*. The investigation of taboos is important, for the taboo continues to work like Kant's categorical imperative: it "operates in a compulsive fashion and rejects every conscious motives".⁷⁴ The taboo has become negative; it is no longer a prohibition but an injunction. Totemism is more difficult to recognize because it has been replaced by new social-religious institutions. For the analysis of primitive cultures and customs vis-à-vis totems and taboos, Freud proceeds from what is for him a tested method: analogy. Just as an individual experiences development from earliest childhood, so too has culture developed from a primal childhood. There is another aspect visible, however: the blossoming of neuroses in his time, the fin de siècle, must also be seen as a temporally bound result of a specific cultural and religious development. Obsessional neurosis is not only a phenomenon analogous with the emotional/spiritual life of primitives, but also a phenomenon that shows how cultural and religious morality has developed and with what consequences. Obsessional neurosis is thus not only a model in an analogy (to primitive culture), but also a sign of a difference (with contemporary culture). This is a basic problem in *Totem and Taboo*, a reason for justified criticism: obsessional neurosis was understood as the product of a cultural development while it was also the model for the origin of that development. Thus obsessional neurosis was in fact studied from its own perspective.⁷⁵

The first of the four parts of *Totem and Taboo* on "the horror of incest" clearly dovetails with the preparatory work of his followers in the *Writings in Applied Psychoanalysis*: the alleged centrality of the Oedipus complex also meant interest in incest desires. In principle the first part also matches an earlier attempt at comparison and analogy of obsessional neuroses and cultural phenomena. Freud now compared the psychology of the (obsessional) neurotic with the psychology of primitive people in both prehistory and contemporary primitive societies. As their distant descendants, modern man have access to their thoughts via everything we inherit from the past: monuments, art, religion, myths, customs and habits. Moreover, we can see the roots of our own civilization in extant primitive societies.

⁷⁴ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.xiv. It is not clear which of Kant's works Freud actually read and what was passed on to him by others. The fact is that he sought confirmation of his ideas, such as when he asked Ludwig Binswanger whether the unconscious probably meant the same as the "thing in itself" (*Ding an sich*). Binswanger answered in the negative. S. Freud, L. Binswanger, *The Sigmund Freud-Ludwig Binswanger Correspondence 1908-1939*, G. Fichtner (ed.), Open Gate Press, London, 2003, p.237.

⁷⁵ Vergote has correctly argued that the Oedipus complex that lies at the heart of neurosis can only occur within a cultural context (family, language, morality). Hence it cannot explain by analogy the foundations of that cultural context. A. Vergote, "Religion after the Critique of Psychoanalysis. The Scope of Psychoanalysis", in *Psychoanalysis, Phenomenological Anthropology and Religion*, J. Coveleyn, D. Hutsebaut (eds.), Leuven University Press, Amsterdam, Atlanta, 1998, pp.17-37 (33-34).

In fact, there is hardly any discussion of a true comparison between obsessional neurosis and primitive societies.⁷⁶ Only in the final line of the first part does Freud make such a comparison. It is certainly not exhaustive and hardly differs from the earlier comparison of obsessional neuroses with religious ceremony. Before making a comparison, Freud had exhaustively mapped the incest prohibition among primitive societies relying almost completely upon James Frazer's 1910 *Totemism and Exogamy*.

In *Totemism and Exogamy* Frazer provided a detailed inventory of totemism across the globe. He strongly emphasized exogamy as the distinguishing characteristic of the totem clan. The most severe punishment within the clan was for violating the ban on exogamy. When he subsequently sought the motive for exogamy, he concluded that the core of the prohibition against exogamy is really a prohibition against incest.⁷⁷ He first rejected a Darwinistic interpretation: the incest prohibition was not put in place in order to preclude the negative effects of inbreeding. He also rejected the related view of Edward Westermarck (cited regularly by Freud): there is no natural, instinctive aversion to incest, for if there were a natural aversion why would there be such a stern prohibition? Ultimately he reached the conclusion that incest was seen as a threat to group cohesion. His emphasis lay completely on the danger for the entire group and not individual danger. In that case punishment would be superfluous, for the "guilty party" would have already punished himself. Thus Frazer did not distinguish between group and individual guilt⁷⁸, nor did he provide any further explanation for the prohibition against incest.

How does Freud fit these ideas of Frazer's into his thinking? Primitives have a very low level of civilization: the sexual drives are barely curtailed by morality. Just the same, there are injunctions and prohibitions. In the absence of religious and social institutions, there is a primitive system in which the totem is central. The totem represents the clan's primogenitor and guardian spirit. Clan members are constrained from killing the totem animal (or eating its flesh).⁷⁹ The second prohibition is that clan members are not permitted to have sexual relations with one another (incest prohibition) and may not marry each other, but must marry outside the clan (the exogamy rule).⁸⁰

Freud tried to chart this prohibition and his first attempt to do so mentions guilt. Violation of this prohibition is punished most severely by the clan. Evidently incest signified a danger for the entire clan and the prohibition against incest served to defend against guilt. Freud referred to Frazer's theory and supplemented it with

⁷⁶ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, pp.16-17.

⁷⁷ J. Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy: A Treatise on Certain Early Forms of Superstition and Society*, Vol.4, MacMillan, London, 1910, pp.71-169.

⁷⁸ *Idem*, p.157.

⁷⁹ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.2.

⁸⁰ *Idem*, p.4.

guilt.⁸¹ The actual meaning of the prohibition, the nature of the danger or the guilt which must be defended against all remain unexplained for the time being. All he did was supply anthropological material in which clan family relations were linked to the central prohibition against incest.

When dealing with the motives for the prohibition against incest, danger and guilt come up, but no more than that. It is all about incest: the analysis of neurotics has shown that the first object choice of young boys is incestuous by nature (i.e., mother, sister). Individuals gradually free themselves of this incestuous fixation, but among obsessional neurotics a piece of the repressed fixation regularly returns. We know that it returns as self-reproach, that as affect its colour fades and it can bind with all kinds of ideas. Yet Freud ignored this here. His point was that the desire for incest is part of a core complex of the neurosis, a desire that, given merely the resistance to the idea, is deeply repressed. That is the only result of the “comparison” between neurosis and primitive people.⁸² The incest prohibition amongst primitives, according to Freud, is generally known; psychoanalysis teaches that the first love object is incestuous. All he did was to observe this similarity.

4.5 Ambivalent feelings

The second part of *Totem and Taboo* dealt with taboos and ambivalence. Freud here debated Wilhelm Wundt, who published the second volume of his voluminous *Völkerpsychologie* in the period 1905-1909 entitled *Mythus und Religion* [Myth and Religion]. In the preface to this volume Wundt wrote that he wanted to contribute from a psychological perspective to research on mythology and the history of religion. His goal was not to explain mythologies but rather the reverse: he sought to enrich psychology with material from the history of religions. Myth and religion provide insight into the psychology of fantasy. Religious ideas are always expressions of fantasy. By fantasy he understood the ability to make conscious that which was not present. Mythology and religion are thus rooted in ideas, in conscious thought.⁸³ Freud directed his criticism at this point.

Before he did so, however, he stated his agreement with Wundt’s analysis of taboo.⁸⁴ Wundt, too, drew attention to its essentially double character: a taboo is both holy and impure. In addition, a taboo is a primal idea: it is not created by a god, not an effect of a system, but in itself holy and impure. Freud reiterated the reasons for investigating taboos: the taboo can “throw a light upon the obscure

⁸¹ Idem.

⁸² Idem, p.17.

⁸³ W. Wundt, *Völkerpsychologie. Eine Untersuchung der Entwicklungsgesetze von Sprache, Mythus und Sitte, Volume II, Mythus und Religion, Part 1-3*, Wilhelm Engelmann, Leipzig, 1905-1909, preface.

⁸⁴ Idem, *Part 2*, pp.234-264.

origin of our own “categorical imperative”⁸⁵ The motive for this comes from outside consciousness.

To what does Wundt trace the origin of taboos? Taboos originate, so Freud cited, where the most primitive and simultaneously enduring human drives have their origin, namely “in fear of ‘demonic’ powers”.⁸⁶ For Wundt human drives are the consequence of conscious thoughts about demonic power. The taboo prevents the demonic powers from being called forth. Gradually the taboo is detached from the belief in demons in order to then become the source of custom and law. Freud noted with irony that Wundt would have been correct if demons really existed, but he also noted that demons (and in their wake gods) have their genesis in psychological motives. After all, belief in demons came about by virtue of the idea that the spirits of the dead wandered around their graves. That belief is thus once again a reworking of ideas about the soul.⁸⁷ Wundt explained the changing character of demons with various combinations of ideas. Once again we are dealing here with the functioning of fantasy: ideas arise in man without knowledge about the origin of the ideas. These ideas are intuitive and are taken without reflection to be immediately true.⁸⁸ Although Wundt did not cite anyone else, Brentano’s theory of inner perception is perceptible here, a theory from which Freud had earlier distanced himself.

With respect to the taboo, we can establish that Wundt thought that the ambivalent character of the taboo was not primal but derivative. Taboos are a reaction to the belief in demons which in turn can be traced back to conscious, intuitive thoughts and ideas about the soul.

In determining his position and that of psychoanalysis, Freud made his differences with Wundt immediately clear. Psychoanalysis is about investigating unconscious influences on mental life and the meaning of this for the concept of taboo.⁸⁹ This possibility is opened up via knowledge about obsessional neurosis, because the obsessional neurotic has created taboos for himself which he maintains as steadfastly as the most primitive savage. For Freud this was the basis for an analogy between taboo and obsessional neurosis. He subsequently mentioned four similarities. The first is that both taboos as well as obsessional prohibitions are unmotivated and enigmatic in origin.⁹⁰ They are maintained with a strict consciousness, with a certainty that violation would bring great calamity. The second similarity is the fear of contact.⁹¹ In both taboos and obsessional neuroses contact with that which is forbidden is avoided at any cost. The third

⁸⁵ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.22.

⁸⁶ Idem, p.24; W. Wundt, *Völkerpsychologie, Volume II, Part 2*, p.307.

⁸⁷ Idem, p.123. We are dealing here with the idea that the soul cannot exist without a body; the link between the soul and breathing; the idea that a “shadow soul” can come to life in dreams.

⁸⁸ Idem, pp.365ff.

⁸⁹ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.26.

⁹⁰ Idem.

⁹¹ Idem, p.27.

similarity lies in displacement: others, people or things, can become the bearer of that which is forbidden.⁹² Finally, there is a similarity as concerns penance and purification: it is possible to make amends for violations.⁹³ He proceeded from these four fundamental similarities. The idea was simple: if I can now clarify the mechanism of obsessional neuroses, by analogy I will achieve insight into taboos.

What follows is a short exposition on obsessional neurosis, closely following what we have already seen and culminating in the Rat Man case. Obsessional neuroses begin with desire which is aggressively directed towards an object. This desire is forbidden by a prohibition “from outside”: father forbids biting girls. This prohibition comes from outside, but is internalized by the Rat Man. This is possible because it can continue to build upon inner forces. It can link up with an extant foundation by which Freud meant relations with loved ones. The Rat Man accepted his father’s prohibition because he loves him. Yet the prohibition cannot neutralize the desire, it can only repress it. This is how the unremitting conflict between drive and interdiction arises. It is from here that the principle character of obsessional neurosis stems: the ambivalence of feelings toward the loved, forbidding person.

Returning to the taboo, Freud maintained that naturally there are differences between the savage and the neurotic, but extending the analogy is nevertheless worthwhile.⁹⁴ Just as with the obsessional neurotic, the prohibition exists in order to keep a desire repressed and one can also presume that behind the taboo lies an unconscious motive. They concern activities towards which there was a strong unconscious desire.⁹⁵ The second important point is that the external prohibition from an authority figure is internalized and subsequently carried over as a taboo from generation to generation. The oldest and most important taboos are the two constitutional principles of totemism: the totem animal may not be killed and the avoidance of incest.

In contrast to Wundt, Freud used the analogy of obsessional neurosis and taboo to try to show that the motives behind the taboo are not conscious ideas but unconscious, desirous tendencies. The source of the taboo cannot be found in fear of demons – and not only because demons do not exist. Within obsessional neuroses anxiety is also a symptom of the defence against a repressed desire. We have seen that when made conscious an unconscious sense of guilt can develop into anxiety. Thus anxiety relates to something repressed. In contrast to Wundt’s unambiguity and clarity of fantasy and ideas, Freud proposed emotional ambivalence. For Wundt ambivalence was derivative, a later historical development. For Freud it was fundamental and in fact formed the basis of every cultural development.

⁹² Idem.

⁹³ Idem, p.28.

⁹⁴ Idem, p.31.

⁹⁵ Idem.

Now, Freud's theory is difficult to prove with the strongest taboos because it is there that the unconscious motives are the most powerfully repressed. He opted for a different approach in order to reveal this ambivalence: the analysis of a trio of taboos which are less central and in which ambivalences should be visible sooner.⁹⁶ For his examples Freud turned to Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, relying principally on the second part on taboo (*Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*) which appeared in 1911.

Frazer saw taboo as part of magic. Within magic he differentiated between positive and negative magic. Positive magic is sorcery and employs the following formula: "don't do this, for otherwise something will happen". The relation of magic to the desired effect is not real but imaginary. It has to do with the avoidance of a presumed danger.⁹⁷ That danger has a double meaning. When the taboo is linked with the sanctity of a person or object, then it is about the avoidance of danger for that which is considered sacred. It may not be endangered, and must be protected. When the taboo is linked with impurity, then the taboo serves to protect others against that impurity. For that matter, savages do not differentiate between sacred and impure: "The conceptions of holiness and pollution are not yet differentiated in his mind. To him the common feature of all these persons [to whom the taboo applies, H.W.] is that they are dangerous and in danger, and the danger (...) is (...) imaginary."⁹⁸ These ideas about danger, danger to the entire group, obviously fit well with *Totemism and Exogamy*. We have just seen that in this regard Freud himself added guilt as a motive, and here, too, with another appeal to Frazer, Freud will address the sense of guilt.

The first two examples Freud cites are the taboos regarding the treatment of enemies and the taboos regarding the ruler (king). With regard to the first group, it can be noted that after the death of enemies extensive atonement rituals take place. The most obvious explanation for this is provided by Frazer (and Wundt): the living fear the revenge of the spirits of the dead.⁹⁹ Freud's point is simple: in addition to hostile feelings for one's enemy, there are also other feelings – feelings of grief – and there is respect for the dead as well as a "bad conscience".¹⁰⁰ For Freud, the one does not follow on from the other, rather the two attitudes exist side by side.

Freud's second example links directly to Frazer's danger theory: the attitude of the people with respect to their ruler is ambivalent. The ruler must be protected and they must protect themselves against him. Both attitudes are surrounded by taboo prescriptions: the ruler may not be touched, and, it is better to keep him at a distance. Yet the ruler is also the protector of the people and for this reason must be

⁹⁶ Idem, p.36.

⁹⁷ J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*, MacMillan, London, 1974, pp.25-29.

⁹⁸ Idem, pp.294-295.

⁹⁹ Idem, p.279.

¹⁰⁰ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.39. The term "bad conscience" is a reference to Nietzsche. See chapter 6.

protected against danger. What struck Freud in Frazer's collected material was the fearful care and concern surrounding taboo prescriptions. He pointed out that in obsessional neurosis fearful concern is also clearly visible in the conscientiousness with which obsessional acts are performed. That fear appears everywhere where apparent tenderness goes hand in hand with unconscious hostility. In other words, fear is the symptom of ambivalent feelings. This is evident precisely in relations with loved ones, with those we "idolize".¹⁰¹ Another similarity between how we deal with a ruler and neurosis is paranoia. The significance of a person can increase enormously for the paranoid if they are considered omnipotent. The origin of this relationship lies in child-father relations: in the eyes of a small child the father is enormously powerful, but he is simultaneously distrusted by virtue of that fact.¹⁰² Freud saw the same ambivalence in the savage's approach to his ruler and suspected the same origin.

Yet the most important similarity between the taboo and neurotic symptoms is the taboo ceremony itself, that is to say, guarding the ruler against danger and guarding oneself from the ruler. The examples Freud borrowed from Frazer indicate that a king is not only elevated, but is also in fact subordinated with the strictest curtailments.¹⁰³ Freud mentioned a number of cultures in which people can be forced into kingship as the brutal severity of the taboos ensures that nobody wants to be king. He recognized in this the compromise character of the obsessional act. The act appears to be designed to keep the repressed urge down, but in the brutal severity of the repression that which has been prohibited is actually repeated. Thus the king has the power to take revenge, but the taboo prescriptions specify that the people may also take revenge on the king.

Freud repeated here the theme he raised in *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices*. Ceremonial and neurotic compulsion both stem from a sense of guilt. That sense of guilt has its origin in the repression of a drive. Self-reproach arises when an external prohibition is internalized. Freud then also pointed out the compromise character of the obsessional act and the religious ceremony: both always permit the desire which must be avoided to be expressed. In so doing he also made an important difference clear. The obsessional neurosis is about the repression of aggressive sexual urges and the religious ceremony is about the repression of (chiefly) anti-social urges. In *Totem and Taboo* this difference plays no significant role. After all, Freud showed in particular in the Rat Man case that hostility is repressed. The emphasis on hostility makes the differentiation between aggressive sexual and anti-social urges no longer relevant. That also has consequences for revenge, for in *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices* revenge is linked to anti-social urges and (thus) to religion. Revenge, which here belongs to the religious domain, in *Totem and Taboo* now also found its way to

¹⁰¹ Idem, p.49.

¹⁰² Idem, p.50.

¹⁰³ Idem.

the obsessional neurosis. The underlying hostility becomes a central point of similarity between taboo and obsessional act. What Freud meant, however, was that the elaboration of the theme of hostility goes too far, but suggested in passing a similarity between a child's hostility toward his father and Frazer's suggestion that the earliest kings were strangers who were seen as representatives of the gods and were sacrificed after a short time; given back, as it were, to the gods.¹⁰⁴

The third example of taboo prescriptions borrowed from Frazer is the most striking and extensive: the taboo surrounding the dead.¹⁰⁵ For his discussion of the taboos around enemies and kings he appealed more or less to the chapters of *The Golden Bough* which bear those titles. Frazer charted the taboos regarding these people, but did not do so for the taboos surrounding death. Freud intended doing just that and to that end suggested that the dead were a category just like other people. Frazer, however, did not speak about the dead in his sections on the taboos surrounding people. Freud borrowed his material from Frazer's discussion of taboos surrounding mourning and those around the names of the dead.¹⁰⁶ These last taboos are part of Frazer's chapter on taboos with regard to words. In this third example Freud's alternative to Wundt's fear of demons also emerges, and crucial for that alternative is the introduction of the effect of the sense of guilt and projection. The dead, Freud wrote, are powerful rulers and are often seen as enemies. The treatment of the dead is surrounded by a number of taboos and specifically concerning those who have had contact with the dead or are mourning. The impurity of the dead was contagious, as it were.¹⁰⁷ The taboo of the dead also includes a number of examples of the prohibition against speaking the name of the dead. Freud specifically highlighted the profound link between name and person. According to him, the taboo forbidding naming the name can be traced back to the taboo prohibiting touching the dead. Central to the taboo surrounding the dead is thus the problem of touch.

Freud had to find an explanation for these ideas. The most obvious was the natural (instinctual) aversion to corpses.¹⁰⁸ Yet this aversion cannot explain all the taboos. Aversion to the physical changes death causes does not logically result in the prohibition of naming names. Another explanation is the screening and protection from mourning, but mourning cannot explain why death is unclean. Those in mourning are often very busy with searching for memories of the dead, not in avoiding them. In particular, the prohibition against speaking the name of the dead is indicative of the fact that primitives are "afraid of the presence or of the return of the dead person's ghost".¹⁰⁹ Speaking the name of the dead calls

¹⁰⁴ In contrast to Frazer, who emphasized the power and danger of kings, Freud emphasized the hostility of the people towards the king.

¹⁰⁵ Idem, pp.51-63.

¹⁰⁶ J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp.271ff, pp.331ff.

¹⁰⁷ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.51.

¹⁰⁸ Idem, p.57.

¹⁰⁹ Idem.

them back to life. Wundt's conclusion is thus impossible to ignore: the essence of the taboo is fear of the soul turned demon. That the dead return as enemies of the living is emphasized by Freud. He also makes use here of Eduard Westermarck's 1907 *Ursprung und Entwicklung der Moralbegriffe* [The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas] and Robert Kleinpaul's *The Living and the Dead in Folk Belief, Religion and Legend*.

Obviously Freud had referred with irony to Wundt's proposition that demons did not really exist, thus the question now is where the idea that the dead return as killers comes from. Westermarck believed that this question was easy to answer: the dead never die naturally, but by accident or sorcery. They are unhappy with their fate and return in order to take revenge, or they long to be reunited with their loved ones and try to bring them over. Thus Westermarck appeals to ideas having to do with magic or experiences of a violent death.¹¹⁰ He believed another explanation for the hostility of the dead lay in an instinctive fear of death and thus of the dead.¹¹¹ This appears to be his favoured explanation. The dead's hostility towards the living is a consequence of the living's fear of them.

In order to form his own answers, including Westermarck's options, Freud returned to his practice. It is with some frequency that a wife (after the death of her husband) or a daughter (after the death of her mother) obsessively reproaches herself believing that she was somehow implicated in the death of the loved one by virtue of carelessness or negligence. This self-reproach is more powerful than the consolatory thought that they had done the absolute best they could. Psychoanalytic research had revealed "that in a certain sense these obsessive self-reproaches are justified". Naturally not because there really was any guilt, but there was "something in her – a wish that was unconscious to herself – which would not have been dissatisfied by the occurrence of death".¹¹² Reproach is the result of this unconscious desire after the death of a loved one. Behind love for a person there is always a certain veiled hostility. It is "the prototype of ambivalence". This is the crux of the position contra Wundt, for the fear of demons is an effect of ambivalence which is so strong among obsessional neurotics and which Freud encountered via his analysis of self-reproach. Fear of the dead is now "a reaction against the hostility latent in their unconscious".¹¹³ How are we to imagine this? After all, ambivalence does not lead to neurotic self-reproach, but fear of the dead. According to Freud, there is a more primitive mechanism at work, namely projection. The hostility is defended against by displacing it to another person. The living deny their own hostile feelings which are now attributed to the dead.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Idem, p.59.

¹¹¹ Idem; E. Westermarck, *Ursprung und Entwicklung der Moralbegriffe, Volume 2*, Klinkhardt, Leipzig, 1913, pp.426-427.

¹¹² S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.60.

¹¹³ Idem, p.61.

¹¹⁴ Idem.

4.6 Projection

There is much to say about the term projection. From the moment that the term projection appeared it stood in relation to self-reproach. In draft H, which he sent to Fliess in 1894, Freud saw projection as the primary defence mechanism active in paranoia.¹¹⁵ His initial theory about paranoia is in fact a derivative of his earlier ideas on hysteria and obsessional neuroses. The case he discusses is about a woman who had repressed a painful, but exciting memory. “What she was sparing herself was the reproach of being a “bad woman”.”¹¹⁶ Desire had released a self-reproach which was now repressed: her self-judgement was now externalized: “people were saying what otherwise she would have said to herself. In that way the judgement, the reproach, was kept away from her ego”.¹¹⁷ Self-reproach was exchanged for a persecution delusion.

We should recall that Freud first used the term projection in his translation of Charcot’s *Lectures* where he used it in his description of automatism during which unconscious psychic processes can form physical symptoms (see 1.2). Projection is thus a hysteric mechanism, but simultaneously also a normal one. We are generally aware that our internal state is visible in our body movements and facial expressions. That which is experienced internally is externally perceptible. Freud saw this internal to external mechanism as normal projection. In paranoia this mechanism is misused for defence. In draft K, dated 1896, this idea of projection is repeated: there is a “refusal of the belief in the self-reproach” and in instead a belief in the reproaches of another emerges.¹¹⁸

For a time Freud was silent on the subject of projection, but in the Dora case the concept reappears in connection with self-reproach. He noted that reproach of another raised the suspicion that hidden behind it lay self-reproach of equal tenor. As an example he cited the experience of accusing a child of being a liar and the child defending itself with the words, “*You’re another!*” That is also the mechanism in paranoia: it is about the “projection of a reproach on to another without any alteration in its content”.¹¹⁹

In 1911-1912 Freud worked further on his ideas of projection in his 1911 *Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia* and in *Totem and Taboo*. The point of departure in the first case was the ambivalent homosexual feelings of the paranoid Schreber. The core of his inner conflict was the desire which can be formulated as: “I (a man) love him”.¹²⁰ To counter this

¹¹⁵ S. Freud, *Draft H*, p.209. On projection as defence mechanism in paranoia see J. Jeremias, *Die Theorie der Projektion im religionkritischen Denken Sigmund Freuds und Erich Fromms*, (diss.), Oldenburg, 1978, pp.42-48.

¹¹⁶ S. Freud, *Draft H*, p.208.

¹¹⁷ Idem, p.209.

¹¹⁸ S. Freud, *Draft K*, p.227.

¹¹⁹ S. Freud, *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, p.35.

¹²⁰ S. Freud, *Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia*, SE XII, p.63.

desire a counter-desire arises: “I do not love him – I hate him”. In the paranoid this conflict is processed by the mechanism of projection: “I do not love him – I hate him – because he hates me”. Here projection is no longer a mechanism of defence. The actual defence consists of the withdrawal of the libido from the object (I do not love him – I hate him). Projection is merely responsible for the symptom of the paranoia, namely the delusion of persecution (because he hates me).¹²¹ Freud even went a step further: projection is not the actual defence but an attempt at restoration where an inner conflict is insoluble.¹²² In other words, the mechanism of projection is not a defence here but rather its opposite: a return to the conflict. In the Schreber case Freud did not mention self-reproach or a sense of guilt. Although one might say that Schreber, too, defended himself against self-reproach (that he loved a man while knowing he should not permit himself to do so), here the direct link to projection is broken. Projection is here no longer a defence (against self-reproach) but a mechanism of symptom formation (delusion).¹²³

This does not mean that in this period Freud broke the link between reproach and projection. It is not only in paranoia that we find this mechanism. The Rat Man case is also evidence of its use. We have already seen that the Rat Man had a strongly developed sense of guilt. That sense of guilt was prominent in his case every time he experienced lust. When he felt the desire to see a girl naked he immediately got the uncomfortable thought that his father must die. We have already seen how this thought was linked to self-reproach, yet it is also linked with projection, i.e. the idea that something bad would happen to his father is derived from the idea that his parents knew his thoughts and desires. That too is projection: an internal idea displaced to others (they know what I know).¹²⁴ This mechanism worked for the Rat Man to support his sense of guilt. His sense of guilt was not the only brake on his lustful desires. The thought that his parents were, as it were, always looking over his shoulder reinforced this and softened the severity of his self-reproach. That others can also be blamed is a defensive projection of self-reproach.

The mechanism of projection is a displacement from “internal” to “external”. In animism it is a primitive mechanism constituting a philosophy of life (*Weltanschauung*) before the development of abstract language made possible another relation with the external world.¹²⁵ That is the meaning of projection in *Totem and Taboo*, a meaning which in fact flows from Freud’s theories up to that point on what the constant factor is among the various illnesses. This displacement

¹²¹ Idem.

¹²² Idem, pp.70-71.

¹²³ As in *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning* perception is thus not the key concept in man’s relation with reality. In paranoia the delusion is a symptom, an attempt to restore the relation with reality after the breakdown of the actual structuring processes, the libinal relation with reality. J.-M. Quinodoz, *Reading Freud*, p.105.

¹²⁴ On projection in the Rat Man case see J. Jeremias, *Die Theorie der Projektion*, pp.54-57.

¹²⁵ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.64.

from internal to external is in reality not a displacement: projection takes place completely within the person's own mind. He imagines that something outside himself is taking place which had previously been only an internal experience. This is not to say that reality is a projection of internal ideas. We are not dealing here with the creation of reality but with the development of a primitive (pre-religious) systematic world view. The links between phenomena, experience and ideas are laid via projections. In other words, this system of thought arises from an interaction between external phenomena which really occur and internal experiences and thoughts which create the links between them. The term projection thus refers to the laying of meaningful links between the internal and external world, before abstract language is developed.

It is important to see that in *Totem and Taboo* Freud introduced the mechanism of projection within the model of the obsessional neurosis and the old models of paranoia. Projection is thus a defence against the hostile feelings accompanying the affectionate feelings towards a dead person, and the construction of a world view. The primitive mechanism of projection can now also be perceived among the most primitive of peoples. Defence against self-reproach (and the impossibility of its conscious processing) results in self-imposed limitations which serve to protect against the so-called external danger. This is Freud's answer to Wundt: behind the fear of demons hide ambivalent feelings and associated self-reproach that is defended against via projection.

He was much more careful and laborious with his use of the term projection in *Totem and Taboo* than some of his followers in the *Writings in Applied Psychoanalysis*. Thus Abraham in *Dream and Myth* saw myths as a projection of a people's desire for greatness, and Rank, too, defended this idea. When Pfister wrote about projection he used it as a synonym for sublimation: projection as sublimation of the primary erotic on a religious love-object. Rank used the term in his studies of Wagner as a mechanism of identification. Storf followed Abraham and Rank regarding the projection of repressed wishes, specifically incestuous and patricidal desires. In short, a lack of clarity on all sides, but the term is repeatedly used with a certain decisiveness and always in reference to Freud. The crowning touch came with Jung's contribution to this diversity of opinions, for his use of the term was particularly problematic for Freud. Although Jung too referred to Freud, the idea that religion could process erotic desire in the way that Jung envisaged it was unacceptable.

As indicated earlier, Freud was very careful, used various meanings of the term projection, employed it himself as a catch-all term whereby it appears that the mechanism of projection was introduced when other explanations fell short. In addition, he wrote in the Schreber case that the term required thorough analysis, although he did not then do this.¹²⁶ As a primitive mechanism it cannot actually clarify and certainly cannot explain anything. He also played down the meaning

¹²⁶ S. Freud, *Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia*, p.66.

of the projection mechanism by pointing out that cultural development has led to less strong and clear feelings of ambivalence than exist among the primitives: only obsessional neurotics with their powerful obsessional reproaches continue to be plagued by the old ambivalences. Freud abandoned the projection mechanism as a mechanism of “internal to external”¹²⁷ in order to focus on what appeared to be more fruitful: the formation of the conscience, in a certain sense as the reverse of projection – the forming of “external to internal”.

4.7 Conscience

An elaborate treatment of projection thus remained unwritten. The question was then raised as to the nature and origin of conscience. Freud understood the term to mean the “internal perception of the rejection of a particular wish operating within us”.¹²⁸ This perception is by definition related to the sense of guilt that was now defined as “the perception of the internal condemnation of an act by which we have carried out a particular wish”.¹²⁹ We have also seen earlier the affinity between conscience and the sense of guilt, when it was said of Hamlet: “his conscience is his unconscious sense of guilt”. The taboo is now a prohibition of conscience whose violation triggers a strong feeling of guilt.¹³⁰

This is the first time Freud paused to consider conscience. Yet it is not so strange that he addressed the theme here. Obsessional neurosis, which served as a model to understand the taboo, was after all characterized by conscientiousness as a reaction formation against an unconscious, lurking temptation. In addition, the sense of guilt can be defined in terms of anxiety: that for which someone reproaches themselves is also something they fear.¹³¹ Nevertheless, Freud addressing conscience here is special. In his earlier theories regarding obsessional neuroses he believed that desire dissolved self-reproach, a self-reproach that was repressed but whose character remained preserved in the primary counter-symptom of conscientiousness. It appeared that conscience was established via an internal dynamic, even if it occurred within a specific cultural morality. Yet he learned from the Rat Man (*inter alia*) that the first prohibition of sexual desire was external: it was the Rat Man’s father who forbade him to bite the maid. Although identification and authority are not explicitly discussed in *Totem and Taboo*, his attention to conscience as the prime counter-symptom addressed a theme which

¹²⁷ *L’usage freudien de terme de projection est, on le voit, nettement orienté. Il s’agit toujours de rejeter au-dehors ce qu’on refuse de reconnaître en soi-même ou d’être soi-même.* J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, p.349.

¹²⁸ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.68. On the concept of conscience in *Totem and Taboo* see A. Lamberntino, *Psychoanalyse und Moral bei Freud*, Bouvier Verlag, Bonn, 1994, pp.129-154.

¹²⁹ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.68.

¹³⁰ *Idem*.

¹³¹ *Idem*, p.69.

is derived from internal dynamics. He cleared the way for the primal father as a great nuisance.

The first great similarity between taboo and conscience is their primal nature. A taboo is a prohibition that sees itself legitimated by itself. In his quest for the causes of taboos, Freud eventually returned to the nature of the taboo itself. The motive behind the creation of the taboo must be sought in ambivalent feelings and that is also exactly what taboos at first sight display¹³²: taboos have a double meaning of sacred and impure. In contrast to Wundt, who found the motive for the taboo in the fear of demons, Freud found the term's duality essential and primal. Taboo is a primal word, a primal prohibition which is "true" in itself. Conscience shares this quality with taboos: conscience appears to need no motivation. It is similar to the categorical imperative which also rejects all motivation and inexorably imposes itself as the truth.

There is another similarity between taboos and conscience: when one is violated it generates an enormous amount of sense of guilt.¹³³ Just as taboos and conscience are grounded in themselves and cannot be criticized, so too is the feeling of guilt directly resulting from the violation of the taboo beyond criticism: the reproach is always just, even if in fact nothing happened. This idea of Freud's fits well with earlier pronouncements regarding the sense of guilt: it cannot be criticized. Whether there is a factual or an imaginary basis does not matter: once it is there, it is there.

Freud freed the way for the primal father as the great nuisance. Taboos are "not a neurosis but a social institution".¹³⁴ There appears to be a difference between a neurotic and a primitive savage: the former acts in an altruistic way and the latter in an egotistical one. The neurotic is altruistic because the fear of punishment for violating the prohibition is not for himself, but for another (the death of a loved one). The primitive fears violating the taboo for himself. Only when the violator is not spontaneously subjected to revenge by the clan leader can a collective feeling of threat emerge which will then punish the violator. There is thus a difference between a neurotic and primitive man, but that difference is superficial: the obsessional neurotic's mortal fear is primarily directed at himself and then shifts to loved ones. Altruism is a kind of compensation for an underlying egoism.¹³⁵ How altruism precisely comes into being Freud does not indicate here.

Yet he did provide a certain explanation. He now proposed that social impulses stem from a contraction of egoistic and erotic components.¹³⁶ This idea was promptly adapted to the study of taboos: obsessional neurosis can shed light on the origin of culture. The same impulses and mechanisms lie at the root of both. On

¹³² *Idem*, p.68.

¹³³ *Idem*, pp.68-69.

¹³⁴ *Idem*, p.71.

¹³⁵ *Idem*, p.72.

¹³⁶ *Idem*, p.73.

account of the differences, he no longer spoke about an analogy between religion and obsessional neuroses but about the neurosis as a “caricature of a religion”, a clownesque and absurd enlargement of religious practices¹³⁷ and simultaneously as the symptom of a bourgeois culture which demanded that one control and behave oneself. This last thought is indeed a consequence of the oldest intuitions regarding bourgeois society as impulse control and the harmful consequences of this (*Carmen*).

Freud invested a great deal of time working out the analogies between obsessional neuroses and taboos. He linked three of the four most important similarities (unmotivated origin and strong conscience; fear of trouble and avoidance of contact with that which is forbidden; and the shift to others) with the sense of guilt, as we have seen in detail above. The fourth analogy, the possibility of penance and purification, were conspicuously not worked out. His attention thus remained with the analysis of the sense of guilt, not with its resolution.

4.8 Systems of thought

The third part of *Totem and Taboo* deals with animism, magic and the omnipotence of ideas. The first sections on animism are an extension of the attention Freud paid to the belief in demons and spirits. Animism is after all “the doctrine of spiritual beings”.¹³⁸ Freud once again reacted to Wundt¹³⁹ with criticism which referred to his debate with Jung: “it is not to be supposed that men were inspired to create their first system of the universe by pure speculative curiosity”.¹⁴⁰ What was he arguing against? Wundt’s view of animism is that it is a system of thought that creates universal coherence from a single point. With this one point Wundt meant an essential, hypothesized human consciousness in its natural condition. The system of thought unfolds along essential paths from a vital starting point, one that is particularly problematic because it is reflexive by nature. Freud did not dispute that there has been cultural development since the very beginning, but he did dispute that this is an essential development from a single unequivocal point. This was also the core of his critique of Jung and his concept of primal libido. For Wundt, animism was an initial intellectual interpretation of the phenomena in their context. These develop into religions and then into scientific explanations.

¹³⁷ “It might be maintained that a case of hysteria is a caricature of a work of art, that an obsessional neurosis is a caricature of a religion and that a paranoid delusion is a caricature of a philosophical system.” Idem. As to the relation between paranoia and philosophy Freud not only refers to the paranoid projection and development of a philosophy of life, but later also refers to Schopenhauer who had argued, according to Freud, that “the problem of death” (which leads to paranoia and projection) “stands at the outset of every philosophy”. Idem, p.87.

¹³⁸ Idem, p.75.

¹³⁹ W. Wundt, *Völkerpsychologie, Volume II, Part 2*, pp.142ff.

¹⁴⁰ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.78.

In principle Freud did not disagree with this tripartite division¹⁴¹: James Frazer, whom he often cited, also employed it. Above all, however, scientific explanations must be sought after: that is an adage to which he always remained true. The problem is in the necessary development of one into another. According to Freud, Wundt could not explain the connection between myth and animism.¹⁴²

In his rejoinder Freud was in search of the motives for the intellectual effort to get to grips with the world and jumped at the chance to analyse the phenomenon of magic. Magic is *the* technique of animism and characterizes itself by its subjugation of natural phenomena to human will.¹⁴³ He directed his attention broadly to magical procedures designed to hurt an enemy, and once again made use of Frazer's material. He spent some time on Frazer's differentiation between imitative or homeopathic magic and contagious magic.¹⁴⁴ The motive for these magic acts does not lie in an intellectual awareness, but "they are human wishes".¹⁴⁵ The will constitutes the motor impulse of the wish; its purpose is to satisfy wishes. At this point primitive magical acts are comparable to child's play. Child's play is the expression of desire and will.¹⁴⁶

That Freud here suddenly spoke about the will as a motor may strike some as astonishing. We are accustomed to him speaking about drives or desires. The introduction of the will here constitutes a retort to Jung's equation of the primal libido with Schopenhauer's *Wille*.¹⁴⁷ Freud's interest in Schopenhauer is not new. He had referred to him a few times earlier in *The Interpretation of Dreams* and Jung was not the first to indicate that there were certain similarities between psychoanalytic discoveries and Schopenhauer's philosophy. In 1911-1912 Rank and the Berlin psychoanalyst Otto Juliusburger (*inter alia*) published articles in which they indicated a similarity between both men.¹⁴⁸ Rank's short article consisted principally of Schopenhauer citations on madness from his 1819 *The World as Will and Representation* which, according to Rank, demonstrated before

¹⁴¹ Idem, p.77.

¹⁴² Idem, p.78.

¹⁴³ Idem.

¹⁴⁴ Idem, pp.79ff.

¹⁴⁵ Idem, p.83.

¹⁴⁶ Idem, p.84.

¹⁴⁷ On Freud and Schopenhauer see P.-L. Assoun, *Freud, la philosophie et les philosophes*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1976, pp.177-203; B. Nitschke, *Aufbruch nach Inner-Afrika. Essays über Sigmund Freud und die Wurzeln der Psychoanalyse*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1998, pp.49-73 ; G. Gödde, *Traditionslinien des "Unbewußten"*, pp.384-461.

¹⁴⁸ O. Rank, "Schopenhauer und der Wahnsinn", in *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse*, 1911/1, pp.67-71, O. Juliusburger, "Weiteres von Schopenhauer, in *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse* 1911/2, pp.173-174, O. Juliusburger, "Psychotherapie und die Philosophie Schopenhauers", in *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse* 1912/3, pp.569-573. Compare also S. Ferenczi, "Philosophie und Psychoanalyse", in *Schriften zur Psychoanalyse I*, M. Balint (ed.), Fischer, Frankfurt, 1970, pp.116-124; A. von Winterstein, "Psychoanalytische Anmerkungen zur Geschichte der Philosophie", in *Imago* 2 (1913), pp.175-237 (217).

Freud that repression existed and that that which had been repressed was based on madness. Indeed, Schopenhauer thought that madmen suffered from wishes which manifested themselves as counter-will (*Widerstreben des Willens*) against the conscious intellect.¹⁴⁹ Via the writings of his followers on Schopenhauer, Freud could easily recognize the terminology of his earlier work. Schopenhauer meant – Rank failed to cite the final line of the chapter on madness – that madness chiefly breaks out when the will gains the advantage and acts as a blind, annihilating force of nature. Thus this will must be moderated, as it were, repressed. That is what Schopenhauer called *Verneinung* (negation).

Schopenhauer's ethics are also based on the relationship between will and intellect.¹⁵⁰ His starting point is Hobbesian: man is essentially egoistic and in a lawless society it's every man for himself. This egoism is held in check by compassion (or "sympathy") which can arise when another person becomes the target of my will. Yet compassion for another is not the only egoistic motive behind the development of morality and keeping the will in check. In this connection Schopenhauer also spoke about guilt: egoism makes one guilty and in fact this is an egoistic motive not to be egoistic. He concurred with the ancient idea that a guiltless life is a life without suffering. Morality thus begins when a person recognizes their guilt. He linked repression (in Rank's words) with a sense of guilt: conscious of his guilt, man wants to be absolved of it by checking his egoistic will. The major difference between Freud and Schopenhauer is that the latter's checking of the sense of guilt was based on conscious consideration while with Freud it took place unconsciously.

We can safely assume that Freud's views of morality implicitly matched Schopenhauer's critique of the Kantian categorical imperative. The categorical imperative is a modern taboo behind which unconscious motives hide. Schopenhauer borrowed that imperative and reached his ethical positions, which Freud was now able to recognize: positions on egoism, sexuality and its repression.¹⁵¹ In the first of his two articles on Schopenhauer, Juliusburger mentioned not only repression as a common point with Freudian psychoanalysis, but also the meaning of sexuality. He cited Schopenhauer's opinion that the human will is concentrated in the sexual drive.¹⁵² In the second article he added a few more points of commonality: sublimation, the father and mother complexes, the primacy of egoism. According to Juliusburger, sublimation lay in the extension of the *Verneinung*/repression: when the "will to lust" can be repressed, room is

¹⁴⁹ A. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Volume 2, Diogenes, Zurich, 1977, chapter 32.

¹⁵⁰ Idem, chapters 47 and 48. Compare also A. Schopenhauer, "Preisschrift über die Grundlage der Moral", in *Sämtliche Werke*, Volume 4, Brodhaus, Wiesbaden, 1972, chapter 3.

¹⁵¹ Compare S. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, p.59. Here Freud lists the main points of agreement between Schopenhauer and psychoanalysis: the dominance of emotions, the importance of sexuality, and the mechanism of repression.

¹⁵² Juliusburger cites from the chapter *Leben der Gattung* [The Life of the Species], Freud's favourite chapter.

created for a conscience that is directed toward higher spiritual issues. He then once again referred to Schopenhauer's ethics, whereas Rank failed to do so: the starting point is egoism, but in his ethics Schopenhauer presented, "one of the most beautiful paths to improvement, to the sublimation of egoism".¹⁵³ Juliusburger strongly emphasized that egoism is conquered when compassion is awakened, that is to say, when an individual recognizes himself in another. Juliusburger did not mention the element of guilt in this.

When Jung referred to Schopenhauer's *Wille*, the emphasis was completely on the element of *Bejahung* (affirmation).¹⁵⁴ Jung emphasized that the will was a free desire to live, a forward striving and expanding power which only in the end of life can become a backwards striving.¹⁵⁵ This process is in fact a biological development of growth toward old age (and death). He introduced this conception of will in *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido* at a crucial moment.¹⁵⁶ When he proposed that there are few things in the world of people which cannot be reduced to the urge to reproduce, he referred to the customary distinction between preservation of the species and self-preservation. In Freud's drive theory this was the essential differentiation between sexual and ego drives, a distinction he used (in *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices*, for example) to show that obsessive neurosis and religion were analogous but not the same. Jung maintained that such a distinction cannot be found in nature. The sexual and ego drives can be summarized as life drives, as the "will to live".¹⁵⁷ For Jung, Schopenhauer's *Wille* is thus the primal libido from which everything stems, the source of all collective and, by derivation, individual developments. Is it thus comprehensible that Jung traced his own ideas back to Schopenhauer? I cannot escape the conclusion that Jung read (even) more selectively than Freud: *The World as Will and Representation* does not present such a clear and overall positive conceptualization of the will.

For Freud the will was not the primal libido, but a "motor impulse" which is linked to a desire. We know, of course, which desires he meant: the ambivalent desires of hate and love. Magic acts are techniques to satisfy wishes in a hallucinatory way. He now proposed that these acts were overvaluations of man's possibilities.¹⁵⁸ The thought and fantasy worlds eclipse reality here. Primitive man thought he could influence reality with his thoughts. Freud eventually concluded that magic was ruled by the "omnipotence of thought".¹⁵⁹ The term is borrowed from the Rat Man

¹⁵³ O. Juliusburger, "Psychotherapie und die Philosophie Schopenhauers", p.573.

¹⁵⁴ Jung explicitly referred to chapter 45 of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* on the affirmation of the will.

¹⁵⁵ C.G. Jung, *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido*, p.364.

¹⁵⁶ Idem, p.130.

¹⁵⁷ Idem. Schopenhauer regards the will as a composition of ego drives and sexual drives. A. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Volume 2, p.665.

¹⁵⁸ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, pp.84-85.

¹⁵⁹ Idem, pp.85ff.

case where the patient used it to characterize his own obsessive thoughts, thereby indicating that his thoughts were stronger than his sense of reality. As we already know, the Rat Man's obsessive thoughts were almost always linked to his sense of guilt: his repressed hate was expressed in obsessive thoughts which permitted his hate to be vented and about which he felt guilty. Indeed, Freud also referred here to neurotics' sense of guilt in general. "To attribute the neurotic sense of guilt to real misdeeds would show an equal misunderstanding." Instead, it is based upon "intense and frequent death wishes".¹⁶⁰ The wish is more powerful than reality (or lack thereof). This is how the neurotic is related to primitive man.

Drawing on Frazer, Freud had already proposed that magic was directed toward enemies, either for protection or as a weapon. In as much as magic is a defence against the expectation of disaster or doom, it corresponds to obsessive neurosis. This certainly included the expectation of death, a conclusion he based on the Rat Man's repressed death wishes. Thus the omnipotence of thoughts to counter the death wishes that are clearly recognizable in a primitive society can also be recognized in obsessive neurosis.

Freud then moved on to an attempt to place the omnipotence of thought in the theoretical framework he had laid out in *Three Essays*.¹⁶¹ A primal stage of autoerotism is followed by object choice. Between these two stages he inserted a third stage: narcissism, a stage in which the love object is not yet outside the child, but is "his own ego, which has been constituted at about this same time".¹⁶²

How and why does Freud introduce narcissism here? Overestimation of one's own powers is the hallmark of the omnipotence of thought, which is the key. The omnipotence of thought is a matter of a kind of infatuation with one's own thoughts. Animism is by nature narcissistic and precedes the religious stage of object-choice as well as the subsequent scientific stage of far-reaching adjustment to reality as source for realistic objects of desire.¹⁶³ This narcissism immediately became Freud's newest weapon in his battle against Wundt and Jung. Animism is not an intellectual interpretation of reality from a single point, a single principle. At the root of animism is that emotional conflict just as narcissism is preceded by a diffuse autoerotic stage. The omnipotence of thought and the influence it can exercise on reality via spirits has as its source a primal emotional conflict and these thoughts have the same source as the taboo prescriptions and the repression of hostile urges and desires. The conflict is not only the source of the creation of the world of spirits and demons, but also the source of the first moral restrictions.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Idem, pp.86-87.

¹⁶¹ Idem, pp.88f.

¹⁶² Idem, p.89.

¹⁶³ Idem, p.90.

¹⁶⁴ Idem, p.93.

4.9 An ancient guilt

The fourth part of *Totem and Taboo* immediately starts to counter Jung and to a certain degree also other followers who had somewhat excessively adapted the Oedipus complex or projection to their own purposes: one cannot expect psychoanalysis “to trace the origin of anything so complicated as religion back to a single source”.¹⁶⁵ Freud also went a step further: even a composite origin discovered by psychoanalysis cannot explain religion’s origins. Nonetheless, in the fourth part he investigated the fundamental contribution psychoanalysis could make to understanding the origin of religion. We must not forget that religion is still not distinct from morality. Put more strongly, the fourth part of *Totem and Taboo* principally addresses the question with which he had always engaged: the origin of morality. In a letter to Abraham he wrote that it was his intention that sense of guilt and conscience should be analytically clarified.¹⁶⁶ Conscience and the sense of guilt had already been discussed, but are the focal point of attention here. He wrote to Jones that in the fourth part he wanted to formulate the historical source of repression and had in the meantime already reached the conclusion that any internal repression is the historic outcome of a hindrance.¹⁶⁷ Morality, sense of guilt and repression are the basic themes whose interconnection Freud wanted to clarify.

Freud returned to totemism which he regarded as a social system, as the oldest form of religion and additionally as a form which had left traces in the customs and habits of modern society. Once again he introduced Frazer’s *Totemism and Exogamy*, as well as Wundt’s *Folk-Psychology*, this time in a positive light.¹⁶⁸ There is a close connection between totemism as religion and as a social system: the clan leaders think they are descended from the totem (although their relationship to the totem is by nature religious and the clan is obviously a social construction). The totem is sacred, and usually represented as an animal; it may not be killed, hunted or eaten, and sometimes even touching or looking at it is also prohibited. The totem clan is an extremely tight group with an important characteristic: exogamy.¹⁶⁹

Freud neatly summed up the questions which he found most important regarding totemism. What is the origin of totemic organization? What is the motivation for exogamy? And what is the link between the two? The first question is historical (directed toward the conditions for the development of totemism) and psychological (in as much as it concerns which human needs totemism expresses). The combination of these two questions is extremely problematic and Jung warned

¹⁶⁵ Idem, p.100.

¹⁶⁶ S. Freud, K. Abraham, *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue*, p.120.

¹⁶⁷ S. Freud, E. Jones, *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones 1908-1939*, R. Paskauskas (ed.), Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 1993, p.148.

¹⁶⁸ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.101.

¹⁶⁹ Idem, pp.102ff.

Freud of this.¹⁷⁰ The historical question is, after all, one of fact, inquiring after real events which lie at the heart of totemism. Jung formulated the problem in a letter: it is of no importance whether the incest prohibition can be traced back to a fact or fantasy. Freud understood Jung's reference: the seduction theory.¹⁷¹ He wrote back that he was taking this warning very seriously. Nevertheless he had decided not to decouple the psychoanalytic question from the historical and would indeed fall back upon the seduction theory.¹⁷² The reason for this is to provide an alternative to Jung.

According to Freud, the question of totemism's origins can be answered in three ways. Nominalistic theories proceed from the idea that groups want to distinguish themselves with names.¹⁷³ Totemism thus originated from the need to differentiate oneself from others. Consanguinity and exogamy are then secondary developments derived from having the same name. Sociological theories proceed from the idea that totemism has its origin in a social instinct.¹⁷⁴ He referred to Émile Durkheim, *inter alia*, and particularly to Frazer and his idea that totemism is in essence a practical organization whereby each clan specializes, if you will, in a specific magical terrain. Such specialization is to everyone's benefit. Freud assumed that such totemism with specializations is a later development. Given that he does not proceed from innate altruism but from egoism, this is not a strange position to take. The third group are the psychological theories.¹⁷⁵ Again he cited first Frazer and his theory that the totem is a kind of sanctuary in case of danger. Totemism then manifests itself out of a belief in the soul, an idea which Frazer later abandoned (rightly, Freud thought). Frazer then developed a second theory: the origin of totemism lay in the search for an explanation for conception. Freud considered this theory implausible. The belief that a man is involved in procreation is more obvious than the belief in impregnation of a virgin by a spirit.

Freud's treatment of the theories of the origin of exogamy and their relationship to totemism is briefer. With regard to their mutual relations, Freud maintained that there are actually two streams: those (e.g., Frazer) who claimed that totemism and exogamy had essentially different origins and those (e.g., Durkheim) who

¹⁷⁰ S. Freud, C.G. Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters*, 315J.

¹⁷¹ *Idem*, 316F. Freud does not mention the seduction theory, but refers to it as his "first big mistake".

¹⁷² I agree with Gay when he writes: "Neurotics, as Freud himself pointed out in *Totem and Taboo*, fantasize about oedipal killings but never carry them out. If he had been willing to apply this clinical insight to his story of the primal crime as he employed other knowledge gleaned from the couch, he would have anticipated and disarmed the most devastating criticism to which *Totem and Taboo* would be exposed." P. Gay, *Freud*, p.333. Indeed, the Oedipus complex and the ambivalence of feelings would have been sufficient to account for the sense of guilt. The critique of Freud's reconstruction of real primal events subsequently distracted attention from the true core of *Totem and Taboo*: the idea that morality and religion should be understood in their conflictuous origin (drive dichotomy) and historic development in which sense of guilt plays a crucial role.

¹⁷³ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, pp.110ff.

¹⁷⁴ *Idem*, pp.113ff.

¹⁷⁵ *Idem*, pp.116ff.

thought they did not. Freud opted for Frazer's position: the incest prohibition which underlies exogamy does not explain totemism and conversely it is difficult to derive this prohibition from totemism.¹⁷⁶ The prohibition should then originate from an instinctive abhorrence of sexual relations with those to whom they are related. This last position is adopted by Westermarck, mentioned above. The horror of incest is "an innate aversion to sexual intercourse between persons living very closely together from early youth".¹⁷⁷ As a contrast to this position Freud cited Frazer: a prohibition is not necessary to reinforce an instinct but to curb the urges.¹⁷⁸ Basically, Freud argued against Jung's ideas on innate potencies here.

We have now in my view arrived at a crucial point in the fourth part of Freud's paper. One would now expect Freud to supply clinical material in order to support his own position vis-à-vis the preceding psychological theories. Yet in his debate with Jung he now turned to a biological authority, Charles Darwin, whereby he simultaneously also introduced the question of historical origin into his argument.¹⁷⁹

Although the moment when he introduced Darwin is crucial, the fact that he introduced him is not that surprising.¹⁸⁰ Darwin's ideas were ubiquitous in Freud's day. Two fundamental ideas are first and foremost characteristic of Darwinism.¹⁸¹ The first is the developmental idea that as such is not new, but is in its application to biology. In this evolutionary conception man is the product of biological development: the transformation of nerves, brains, etc. Second, man is the absolute high point of evolution and may nurture the hope that this development will not end: man can achieve an even higher destiny. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries these two fundamental Darwinian principles were taken as read. The question was not whether there was evolution, but its course. The question was not whether there is a higher stage of development, but what it will look like. Freud was falling back not only on a recognized authority, but additionally on someone he had trusted since his earliest scientific work. When he still worked in the laboratory he studied brains, nerves and the transformations of abnormalities. We have also seen how strong the biological explanatory models were for mental illnesses (Krafft-Ebing, Löwenfeld). And we have seen for

¹⁷⁶ Idem, pp.119ff.

¹⁷⁷ Idem, p.122; E. Westermarck, *Ursprung und Entwicklung der Moralbegriffe*, Volume 2, p.299.

¹⁷⁸ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.123.

¹⁷⁹ Idem, p.125.

¹⁸⁰ On Freud and Darwin see E. Wallace, *Freud and Anthropology: A History and Reappraisal*, International Universities Press, New York, 1983, pp.9-13; L. Ritvo, *Darwin's Influence on Freud. A Tale of Two Sciences*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1990. Ritvo has convincingly shown that Darwinian thought influenced Freud from the very beginning of his academic career (and even before that in his *gymnasium* days). Especially the influence of Meynert is noteworthy. Idem, pp.170-187.

¹⁸¹ R. Safranski, *Nietzsche. Biographie seines Denkens*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 2000, pp. 270-271.

example his teacher Meynert's pronounced Darwinism in *The Brain and Civilized Behaviour*.

I should like to add one additional fundamental Darwinistic principle: the search for the origin of phenomena, not only within biology, but for example also within the up and coming human sciences. The anthropological material Freud brought together in *Totem and Taboo* has the common characteristic that it searches for the origin of culture and morality and the discrimination of fundamental principles and secondary developments. The latter is also typically Darwinistic. Freud's writings, whether case studies or applied psychoanalytic studies, were in each case quests for causes. Freud (in this time) is thus a "Darwinian"; Darwin was a self-evident authority whom he came to know via his earlier teachers.¹⁸²

This should not blind us to the differences. One of the most important differences is the origin of morality. Darwin, too, was in search of the origin of morality and indeed (like Freud) based on a reference to Kant.¹⁸³ He wondered where duty comes from, but his answer was that morality does not arise from selfishness and was also not based on the utilitarian principle of the greatest happiness. Based on his studies of animals and primitives Darwin proceeded from the following: "moral sense is fundamentally identical with the social instincts".¹⁸⁴ These social instincts are directed at the group. Social instincts are those which are visible among the animals and among people are called ethical. A most important social instinct is sympathy.¹⁸⁵ Yet love, too, and even conscience were social instincts for Darwin (he cited the example of the conscientious dog). Of course morality among people is developed to a high form, a morality in combination with intellect and habit is based on the golden rule of the categorical imperative. Like Darwin, Freud posed the question of origin, but he made no mention of an innate or inherited altruism. Jung was much closer to Darwin's ethics. Put even more strongly, while Jung never cited Darwin in *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido* among many other greats, his theory of the inheritance of archaic remnants and developments to a higher level was much closer to Darwin and other evolutionist theories than Freud.

It is in his debate with Jung that Freud explicitly introduced Darwin. Darwin was already discussed in their correspondence. Jung had read the first part of *Totem and Taboo* and had made some objections to Freud's theory regarding the incest prohibition.¹⁸⁶ Jung wrote that he had come to the conclusion that incest is

¹⁸² In addition Stocking has argued that the anthropologists Freud drew upon in *Totem and Taboo* were "products of the post-Darwinian intellectual milieu" that "drew heavily on classic evolutionist thought". He adds that in *Totem and Taboo* classic Darwinian evolutionism is left behind: the primitive and savage are no longer regarded as an early stage in human development, but are seen as irrational elements in the psychic life of civilized man. G.W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, The Free Press, New York, 1987, p.326.

¹⁸³ Ch. Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, J. Tyler Bonner, R. May (eds.), Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1981, part I, p.70.

¹⁸⁴ *Idem*, pp.97-98.

¹⁸⁵ *Idem*, pp.72ff, p.82.

¹⁸⁶ S. Freud, C.G. Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters*, 312J, 313J.

essentially a “fantasy problem” and that parts of the incest prohibition had only become part of patriarchy where culture had already developed into the formation of families.¹⁸⁷ Fathers need no strong prohibition to keep children in check. It was grown sons they needed to fear, but by that time sons no longer have incestuous desires toward their mothers. A tendency toward incest is probably more likely within a matriarchical culture but, given the promiscuity of such societies, fathers had no interest in an incest prohibition for their sons. Jung then stated that the purpose of the incest prohibition was not to prevent incest but to establish the family and, by extension, establish religion and the state.¹⁸⁸ Yet, Jung wrote, the incest prohibition may well be foundational for the family for its content was “worthless” and functioned at the level of an empty atonement ceremony. As far as the incest prohibition can be regarded as “primal morality”, this is so only in this latter meaning: something is being forbidden which has never been meaningful but can indeed be made important in fantasy. Freud reacted by stating that a primal promiscuity was improbable (and that there must thus have been some form of a prohibition or command) and that he himself chose the “Darwinian” line.¹⁸⁹

What then is the Darwinian line? In *Totem and Taboo* Freud referred to *The Descent of Man* (1871), specifically chapter 20 of the second part in which Darwin wrote about the differences between men and women. In that chapter Darwin developed a hypothesis about the social bonds of the primal horde and inquired after the origin of marriage. Although at that time many assumed that primitive societies were characterized by promiscuity, by analogy with all kinds of ape species Darwin hypothesized that “promiscuous intercourse in a state of nature is extremely improbable”.¹⁹⁰ What then is the analogy between ape and man at this point? It is the male’s jealousy of his rivals. The primal horde was probably actually a small group, lead by a jealous man who protected the group against other men. Within the group competition arose between the younger men and the leader of the group: the strongest wins and the others are banished. This hypothesis is supported by Darwin’s observation that in the most primitive cultures one finds polygamy or monogamy, but never promiscuity. Freud now drew upon this hypothesis: the primal horde and its jealous leader provided Freud with an argument against Jung’s idea that the incest prohibition was secondary.¹⁹¹

This hypothesis of Darwin’s also formed James Atkinson’s point of departure in his 1903 book *Primal Law*. Using this hypothesis, Atkinson tried to derive a theory regarding the earliest developments in social forms and the origin of the first prohibition and commands. Freud introduced him in order to connect

¹⁸⁷ Idem, 313J.

¹⁸⁸ Idem.

¹⁸⁹ Idem, 314F.

¹⁹⁰ Ch. Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, part II, p.362.

¹⁹¹ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.125.

the Darwinian primal horde and the origin of exogamy.¹⁹² In the primal horde the sexually jealous leader makes marriage between the sons and the women impossible, not as a law, but in practice. Exogamy arose as “habit (not as an expressed law)”.¹⁹³ The jealousy and competition led to the expulsion of the sons who went and established their own horde. The custom of exogamy was then continued in the new horde. Exogamy as a custom was thus also fundamental for the development of totemism and totem clans. But how did these sons find their women? How were new hordes created? Atkinson proposed the idea that once strong enough the son horde would attack the primal horde, kill the leader and steal the women. The son horde would subsequently fall apart on account of the same sexual jealousy which was characteristic from the beginning.¹⁹⁴ In this theory there is no reason why history could not be repeated forever. Atkinson also created a more prominent role for women. Because childhood is longer, sons fall increasingly under the influence of motherly love and the spiral of jealousy and murder can be broken. How? The mother’s devotion meant that the men were able to differentiate between the women and attach themselves to a single woman or a pair of women. This development meant that it was possible for many men to live in a single horde. Yet the old habit, exogamy, remained and became law: jealousy remained a strong instinct. This is where Freud found the idea of the son-horde that kills the father. He dismissed the idea that morality arose from motherly love.¹⁹⁵

The question that remained for Freud is that of the relationship between totemism and exogamy (the incest prohibition). The various anthropological visions evidently did not deliver a decisive argument for one or the other and thus Freud now turned to his own clinical experiences and those of his follower Sandor Ferenczi. Two studies of children were presented: Little Hans and Little Arpad.¹⁹⁶ Freud’s starting point was once again the analogy (this time) between children and primitive man.¹⁹⁷ Like savages, children’s uninhibited nature places them close to the animal world, but a harmonic relationship can be disturbed and then a fear of animals develops, as with Little Hans, usually after a period of intense interest in the relevant animal. Analysis showed that the fear of an animal can be traced back to fear of the father. Freud described the core of his analysis of Little Hans. The young boy competed with his father for his mother’s favour, and found himself in

¹⁹² Idem, p.126.

¹⁹³ J. Atkinson, *Primal Law*, Longmans Green and Co., London, 1903, pp.212-213.

¹⁹⁴ Idem, pp.220-221.

¹⁹⁵ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, pp.142-143.

¹⁹⁶ Idem, pp.128-132, S. Ferenczi, “Ein kleiner Hahnemann”, in *Schriften zur Psychoanalyse 1*, pp.164-171. From 1912 on Ferenczi corresponded with Freud on the case of Arpad. The case study was published in 1913.

¹⁹⁷ Rieff has correctly argued that Freud’s use of analogy between the primitive and the child was not solely an effect of psychoanalytic thought, but in fact a customary trait in anthropological studies that construed the primitive society as the childhood of civilization. Ph. Rieff, *The Mind of the Moralist*, pp.208-209.

a “typical” relationship with his parents, a relationship “which we have given the name of the “Oedipus complex””, the “nuclear complex of the neuroses”¹⁹⁸ This is the first time that he so clearly makes the Oedipus complex central, although he subsequently immediately focused on the father and the ambivalent feelings with regard to him alone.

The two case studies reveal important similarities with totemism. The special relationship Little Hans had with horses and Little Arpad with chickens are evidence of ambivalent feelings with regard to these animals. Both boys identified either by behaviour or in words with the animals. Both analyses demonstrated that the relationship with the animals could be traced back to that with the father. Totemism reveals the same pattern: the totem animal is the tribal father. In the two cases and in totemism everything revolves around the father in the role of the opponent with respect to the child’s sexual interests.¹⁹⁹

Primitive people call their totem their primal father and that, coupled with the analogy between child and primitive, was reason enough for Freud to define totemism based on the relationship with the father. The two principle commands of totemism, the totem cannot be killed and sexual relations with the totem’s women is prohibited, are now consistent with a child’s two Oedipal desires.²⁰⁰

How did Freud want to make this hypothesis convincing? He went in search of Oedipal residues in totemism. To that end he introduced *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (1889) by William Robertson Smith into the debate.²⁰¹ Freud knew this was a gamble, for he refers to a weak point in Robertson Smith’s theory (what it claims about totemism is not confirmed by extant totemic material) and tried to defend him against criticism.²⁰²

In the foreword to the first edition of his book, Robertson Smith made clear that he was continuing with the material assembled by Frazer and also made grateful use of other historical-critical studies.²⁰³ Robertson Smith sought to study the great Semitic religions in their entirety on the basis of commonalities. These religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) were the positive religions, that is to say, they were all established by religious innovators (Moses, Jesus and Mohammed). Behind these, he maintained, lay the “old unconscious religious tradition”, the entirety of customs and belief that cannot be traced back to an individual authority or founder.²⁰⁴ Religious traditions develop; in order to understand them one must study their development. It is thus interesting to examine the historical origin of

¹⁹⁸ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.129.

¹⁹⁹ Idem, p.131.

²⁰⁰ Idem, p.132.

²⁰¹ W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, Adamant Media Corporation, Boston, 2005 (reprint of the original edition published by Adam and Charles Black, London, 1894).

²⁰² S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, pp.132-133, pp.139-140 (footnote).

²⁰³ W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, preface.

²⁰⁴ Idem, p.1.

positive religions: upon what material does a founder build? Robertson Smith took it as a general opinion that religions arise from proclamations of faith (creeds) and dogmas on one hand, and religious practices and traditions on the other. Ancient religions demonstrate that practices and customs precede the proclamations of faith and dogmas. Between the two lie the myths which in fact form the transition between ritual and dogma.²⁰⁵ As regards the Semitic religions, Robertson Smith dealt with rituals and customs as well as specifically with the practice of sacrifice, which appears as self-evident in the Old Testament, but is never explained. Sacrifices simply happen.²⁰⁶ Another issue for him is that religious practices and traditions are part of the group's social order. For the members of the group, maintaining religious practices is described in terms of duty and obedience. What does the group now consist of? According to Robertson Smith, they consist of a group of (blood) relatives and fellow townspeople *and* the gods.²⁰⁷ Thus a person was always included in a well-defined relationship with neighbours and gods. The relationship between the gods and the group can be described in terms of paternity. That paternity has two important aspects. The physical aspect signifies consanguinity. The moral aspect signifies that the father-child relationship is one of protection and obedience. He thus traced religion back to a moral principle: obedience to the father's authority.²⁰⁸

Robertson Smith now links the idea of this mutual relationship between the gods and the group with the practice of sacrifice: in its oldest form, animal sacrifice is a social institution between the gods and men and it is an extension of the communal feast. This sacrificed animal was originally also part of the group. (Robertson Smith agreed here with Frazer's ideas on totemism.) The sacrificial animal may be killed and eaten if the entire group agrees and actively participates. The purpose of the sacrifice of an animal that belongs to the group is nothing less than the constitution of the group: the animal confirms the blood bond between the members.²⁰⁹

When Freud recapitulated Robertson Smith's ideas a number of issues became conspicuous.²¹⁰ Robertson Smith opined that the primitives' gods are mortal and

²⁰⁵ Idem, pp.17ff.

²⁰⁶ Idem, pp.213ff.

²⁰⁷ Idem, p.224, pp.253-257.

²⁰⁸ Idem, 255ff.

²⁰⁹ Idem, Lecture VIII. This blood kinship is strongly stressed by Freud. S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, pp.134-138.

²¹⁰ One of the striking facts regarding Freud's reading of Robertson Smith is that the latter focussed his attention on ancient Semitic religion, especially ancient Judaism. Although Freud's fascination for his own religious background in general and the figure of Moses in particular has often been elaborated upon by scholars, it has hardly been noticed that Judaism is virtually absent in *Totem and Taboo* as if Freud was unable to situate Judaism in the general development from primitive religions to monotheistic religions. As we will see, in *Moses and Monotheism* this problem is resolved: Judaism was monotheistic from the very beginning and is thus an exception to the general rule of development. On this issue see H. Westerink, "De mythische held of de man Mozes? Over joodse mythologie", in *Tijdschrift voor Psychoanalyse* 13, 2007/1, pp.3-15.

that the sacrificial animal originally belonged to the group as a blood relation²¹¹, he thus stressed the kinship between men, gods and animals, and not the animal as representant of the god. Yet Freud brought this to the fore. After all, he wrote that “originally they [the sacred animals] were identical with the gods themselves”.²¹² Robertson Smith believed that within the most primitive groups of people gods and animals were both blood relatives and equal in meaning and value. Only in the second development, after animals were differentiated from people and gods, was the sacrificial animal raised to the value of gods and people; only then could the sacrificial animal be seen as representative of the gods and man.²¹³ The second idea Freud emphasized is the sense of guilt within the sacrificing group. He wrote that the group collectively sacrificed in order to be able to avoid reproaching one another: they are all equally guilty.²¹⁴ Yet we do not find this idea in Robertson Smith’s work: the sacrifice is communal because the entire community acts as a whole. He did indicate, however, that the group mourned and grieved after the sacrifice. Any “feelings of contrition” may play a role in this: reflection reveals that these feelings are not “expressions of sorrow for sin”, but in their oldest, essential form are part of mourning the death of a “kindred victim”.²¹⁵ We can only speak of guilt when we are dealing with the murder of a member of the group, but there is no question of murder in sacrifice. When, however, Freud wrote about the sacrificial animal, he called it a murdered or slaughtered animal.²¹⁶ These differences in emphasis are significant: Freud’s reading of Robertson Smith raised two typical themes: the father’s death²¹⁷ and the sons’ sense of guilt.²¹⁸ These had been familiar themes since *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

Freud read through psychoanalytic glasses: after all, psychoanalysis taught that the totem animal is the father substitute. This is why, according to Freud, it is forbidden to kill the animal. This is why the dead are mourned and why the sacrificial meal is simultaneously also a celebration. These are the reverberations with respect to the father.

²¹¹ Idem, p.85, pp.287-288.

²¹² S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.136.

²¹³ W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, p.416.

²¹⁴ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.146.

²¹⁵ W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, p.433. Robertson Smith describes the communal feasts as joyous events, “untroubled by any habitual sense of human guilt”. Idem, p.255.

²¹⁶ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.135, p.152.

²¹⁷ “Psychoanalysis has revealed that the totem animal is in reality a substitute for the father.” Idem, p.141.

²¹⁸ Idem, pp.140ff.

Now Freud could present a synthesis of Darwin, Atkinson and Robertson Smith, a “hypothesis which may seem fantastic”.²¹⁹ This fantastic hypothesis stems from the question of how the transition from Darwinian primal horde to totem clan and its corresponding taboos must be conceptualized. The key is the totem meal, derived from Robertson Smith’s sacrificial meal. The sons who have been driven away join together one day, murder their father and eat him. The primal father was a feared example and by eating him they identify with him. They make a part of his strength their own. The totem meal is subsequently a “repetition and a commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things – social organization, moral restrictions and of religion”.²²⁰ How did Freud make this credible? It must be assumed that as regards the father the mob of brothers have the same ambivalent feelings as can be observed in children and neurotics: they hate and admire their father.²²¹ His death meant satisfaction of that hate and eating him identification with him. What follows is remorse in the form of a sense of guilt. When we follow Freud’s logic, that the sense of guilt is also generated out of the positive part of ambivalent feelings, then the sense of guilt stems from love and admiration. These form the basis for identification. In other words, the sense of guilt stems from identification with the admired and hated father, specifically with the father’s violent, terrifying power. He repeatedly refers to psychoanalytic experience with neurotics in his argument, particularly obsessive neurotics. This reference is essential: in a later development identification and the sense of guilt lead to obedience to the father. The primal rebellion is transformed after the crime into obedience.

In order to achieve a good understanding of Freud’s psychoanalytic contribution to this fantastic hypothesis, we must briefly recapitulate our discussion of the Rat Man. As we have seen, obsessive neurosis is the psychoanalytic model that serves as the backdrop for *Totem and Taboo*. With the exception of the contributions concerning Little Hans and Little Arpad, it is the Rat Man case that constitutes the basis of the central thesis about the ambivalence of feelings and the taboo. The repeated treatment of the problem of a sense of guilt is part of psychoanalytic theory regarding obsessional neurosis. The sense of guilt is the very core of the

²¹⁹ Idem, p.141. An overview of critique by anthropologists – after all, Freud had primarily made use of anthropological material – on this “hypothesis” can be found in E.R. Wallace, *Freud and Anthropology*, pp.113-169. One of the most important critics in this respect was Bronislaw Malinowski who severely criticized the universality of the Oedipus complex (whereas his field work among the Trobriand islanders also revealed remarkable confirmation of Freud’s ideas on myths, dreams and sexual obsessions) in the 1920s. His critique would long influence the difficult relationship between psychoanalysis and anthropology. Geza Roheim, one of the few “Freudian” anthropologists, would dedicate his work to prove Malinowski’s critique wrong. For an overview on Malinowski’s critique, his hidden agendas, and the misunderstandings concerning Malinowski’s Freud critique see Y. Kuiper, “Oedipus op de Trobriandeilanden. Vijf misverstanden over de verhouding tussen antropologie en psychoanalyse”, in *Tijdschrift voor Psychoanalyse* 13, 2007/1, pp.26-39.

²²⁰ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.142.

²²¹ Idem, p.143.

hypothesis which describes the origin of totemism and taboos. Social organization, morality and religion stem from the sense of guilt, and the sense of guilt stems from a crime, but what was the origin of the sense of guilt again?

We have seen in the Rat Man case that the origin of his obsessional neurosis and his sense of guilt were not so easy to trace back to hate and love towards a person. Obsessional ideas were “transformed self-reproaches which have re-emerged from repression and which always relate to some sexual act that was performed with pleasure in childhood”.²²² What did Freud mean by some sexual act? In the Rat Man case it was very concretely about biting the maid. The girl was seen as a sexual object and when his father intervened and biting was forbidden, the father was experienced as interfering and the Rat Man directed his hate against him. The analysis of the sense of guilt leads to a component of cruelty within the sexual drive. The trail thus led back to the drives, to love and hate which feed off and restrain each other. This dialectic is linked in earliest childhood to a person: love for the mother and hate of the father. Cruelty finds its object here. Freud wrote of a “pairing” and stated that these conflicts were not independent of one another. Yet the two emotional conflicts have simultaneously both intrinsically and genetically nothing in common: the sadistic urge is different from hate of the father; auto-erotic love is intrinsically different from love of the mother. Still more important in this regard is the genetic difference. The drives are representative of somatic stimulations. Love for the mother and hate of the father are not biologically anchored urges, but the effect of object choice and its failure. The essential point, since his surrendering of the seduction theory, is that it is not important whether the father was in fact interfering, but whether the child experienced the father as interfering. Freud discovered that we are not dealing here with fact, but with experience in fantasy.

The question we should like to ask Freud is why he suddenly wanted to trace back the sense of guilt to an actual crime. There is a moment when Jung correctly warned him of the seduction theory pitfall – as we have seen. Gay wrote of an “obstinacy” which had previously not been so visible.²²³ I hypothesize that tracing the sense of guilt back to a cruelty component of the drives could bring Freud dangerously close to Jung’s theories regarding the primal libido and archaic residues. Now, he indeed came close to these Jungian ideas when he opined that the sons act as a collective mind and that the sons’ sense of guilt leaves traces in history and must be repeatedly dealt with. In addition, he thought that psychical dispositions

²²² S. Freud, *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*, p.221.

²²³ P. Gay, *Freud*, p.334.

(especially the sense of guilt) were inheritable.²²⁴ What he absolutely wanted to avoid was that all kinds of psychic dispositions and mental developments stemmed from a single inherited or collective (drive) mechanism. He did propose the idea that ambivalence is a fundamental phenomenon. This ambivalence could thus be part of our heritage, but Freud would not tolerate this idea. It is also possible that the ambivalence was originally perceived as strange and only arises from the father-complex.²²⁵ Thus he opted for a primal crime in order to not give the ambivalent feelings the status of Jung's primal libido. Freud then had to design a theory of how the sense of guilt worked through history after the primal crime and how every new generation had to produce prohibitions and curtailments.

Neurotics represent here an extreme, but when one inquires after the "why" of their "excessive morality"²²⁶ (*Übermoral*) no fact can be produced, no primal crime, only wishful fantasy. This wishful fantasy among neurotics is the source of their sense of guilt. Yet Freud chose the primal crime and not the primal fantasy. For this reason he now even adapted his theory of the neuroses: an excessive morality is not based on the repression of feelings and ideas alone, but always upon some piece of reality as well. The Rat Man bit the maid. Thus, "in the beginning was the Deed"²²⁷ and this is so for every generation, every individual anew.

The drive contains a component of cruelty in every person; this characterizes the earliest, perverse phase. It is human fate that this is irrevocably paired with the first objects: mother and father. The cruelty component is irrevocably directed at one person; whoever interferes becomes the victim and the sense of guilt follows of its own accord. This repetition is for Freud a tragic fate that needs further interpretation. He suggests that at least some sense of guilt can pass from generation to generation over thousands of years "through the inheritance of psychic dispositions".²²⁸ The whole theory of primal origin and its aftereffects was, after all, based on the idea of a certain continuity in the mental life of man.²²⁹ And yet the sense of guilt does not appear to be completely inheritable: an inheritable sense of guilt would make prohibition and repression superfluous. With an innate sense of guilt every taboo

²²⁴ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.158. The idea of the inheritance of psychic dispositions can be seen as an influence of the evolutionist thought of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. In work on Freud's sketchy study *Overview of the Transference Neuroses* (written in 1915, but only published in 1985), his correspondence with Ferenczi, and especially *Moses and Monotheism* Freud's so-called pseudo-Lamarckism has been recognized. Two remarks should be made here. First, the idea of the inheritance of psychic dispositions can already be found in the Old Testament and Greek mythology. Hence, Freud need not have been directly influenced by Lamarck, but might have had other sources. Second, Meynert taught Freud that the idea of the inheritance of acquired characteristics was "a Darwinian doctrine". Given that Darwin is elaborated upon in *Totem and Taboo* and Lamarck is not mentioned, it is plausible Freud still believed the idea was Darwinian. L. Ritvo, *Darwin's Influence on Freud*, p.31, p.173.

²²⁵ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.157.

²²⁶ *Idem*, p.160.

²²⁷ *Idem*, p.161.

²²⁸ *Idem*, p.158.

²²⁹ *Idem*, pp.157-159.

would be unnecessary and Kant would never have come up with the categorical imperative. Hence, there is an inheritance of psychic dispositions “which need to be given some sort of impetus in the life of the individual before they can be roused into actual operation”.²³⁰ A “deed” is required.

The Deed is thus primarily anti-Jung. It is an alternative to Jung’s primal libido and all its consequent developments. It was also an alternative to a world in which the difference between fantasy and reality did not mean much and the sense of guilt was ascribed little significance.²³¹ Simultaneously, it must be stated that the choice for the deed can be seen as more than just a reply to Jung. His followers had levelled the field here. Freud did not just associate himself with Darwin and Robertson Smith, but also with Storer, who in his palaeontology of ethics stated that the Oedipus complex lay at the root of ethics, as a concrete historical fact.

We now return to Freud’s argument. Identification and the sense of guilt lead to obedience to the father. What happens is the following. The sons’ sense of guilt, based on identification with the murdered father (love and admiration), leads to a retraction of their act. The totem is set up as a father substitute and what led to the sense of guilt is now declared illegal: taking the totem’s women and the death of the totem animal. What is forbidden (repressed) are both of the Oedipus complex’s desires.²³² Establishment of the incest prohibition or the exogamy command, incidentally, is not only based upon Oedipal wishes. There is a practical reason as well: competition among the brothers over the women could be devastating to the horde. Freud did not forget to consider fraternal (and sororal) jealousy.²³³

The totem animal may not be killed. The sons used this to try to “allay their burning sense of guilt, to bring about a kind of reconciliation with their father”.²³⁴ That atonement is realized by obedience to the father/totem. In all later religions this fundamental characteristic can be seen whereby “they vary according to the stage of civilization at which they arise and according to the methods which they adopt”.²³⁵ Religions are not only expressions of the sense of guilt and attempts at atonement. The living memory of the victory over the father remains within them as well. The totem meal and the animal sacrifice are repetitions of the primal crime which is preserved in memory just when changing circumstances threaten to lose it. The brotherhood remains too: social organizations are the continuation of this. Thus morality (and religion) is based on the primal horde’s sense of guilt.

²³⁰ Idem, p.158. This idea will be repeated, as we will see, in the Wolf Man case.

²³¹ A few years later Freud wrote that in Jungian thought “the Oedipus complex has a merely ‘symbolic’ character” and the neurotic’s sense of guilt only “corresponds to his self-reproach for not properly fulfilling his ‘life-task’”. S. Freud, *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement*, p.62.

²³² S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.143.

²³³ Idem, p.144.

²³⁴ Idem.

²³⁵ Idem, p.145.

We have seen that Storfer's palaeontology of ethics matched Hobbes's theories of the social contract. Rieff correctly observed that Freud's thinking about the horde and about the masses was very close to Hobbes's.²³⁶ The big difference between Hobbes's social contract presented in his 1651 *Leviathan* and Freud is that the former was based upon a (rational) assessment of needs: it is in my interests to surrender some of my freedom in order to remain alive and own things. In order to make a safe society possible an individual is prepared to subject himself to the Leviathan, the authority with absolute power who determines what is right.²³⁷ Freud's primal horde theory is in fact also a theory of a social contract. That contract is, however, not based on an assessment of personal interests but on the sense of guilt after the murder of the "Leviathan". That element of the sense of guilt is powerfully stressed, more powerfully even than by Storfer. After all, Storfer proposed first a social contract and only then the patricide. In the working through of the murder he laid emphasis not on the sense of guilt and the formation of morality but on the projection of desires in religion.

In the above I have brought Freud's emphasis on variability and change to the fore. No matter what, he sought to prevent an unequivocal mental principle being thought to underlie human acts, a principle that was thought to be inheritable and present in culture as a continuous undercurrent, an ontological essence. The development of repression of the sense of guilt (and consequently the development of morality and religion) is not constant, however (as with Jung), but shifts and varies. After briefly mentioning the patterns that run through religion (the totem sacrifice and the father-son relationship), he maintains that the personal relationship with a god is formed after the relationship with the biological father, but emphasized that this is about a relationship that varies from person to person. Freud does not mention the term projection here either, in order to avoid automatism.²³⁸ The father-son relationship can, he wrote, also be essentially changed through history: the democratic, evenly matched son-horde, after all, disintegrates into individuals. He subsequently cited a number of changes, for example in the meaning of the sacrificial animal. Originally it was the father, then a god and later still simply an animal offered to the gods. There are for example myths in which not people but the gods kill sacred animals. These developments are different kinds of repudiations of the primal crime.²³⁹ The ambivalence towards the father, father figures or gods appears to have been stronger in the past, at least more easily seen, but appearing now to be completely struck silent. In short, Freud

²³⁶ Ph. Rieff, *The Mind of the Moralist*, pp.242ff. Rieff correctly notes that unlike Hobbes, Freud was not interested in a theory legitimizing governmental authority, but was searching for the origins of morality.

²³⁷ Th. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, R. Tuck (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, f.e. chapter XVIII.

²³⁸ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.147.

²³⁹ Idem, p.150.

cited a number of shifts and variations while not offering an explanation or a clear motive for these changes.

He did not present the changes as fixed mechanisms. This is an important point, for in fact he thus differentiated himself not only from Jung, but also from other followers. Compared with followers who regularly wrote about “projections onto heaven”, Freud is more nuanced. Not every cultural development was an improvement and projection could certainly not explain religion, quite the contrary.

Cultural history does not show either logic or consistent progress.²⁴⁰ Typical here is Freud’s elaboration of Christianity.²⁴¹ For Jung this constituted liberation from the neurotic compulsions of Jewish law. Freud brought the element of original sin to the fore. This Christian doctrine is not a liberating victory over Judaism. It is, however, one more doctrine that expresses the sense of guilt relationship between God and humanity. Freud made clear that Christianity did not have to stem from Judaism: it had to compete with, for example, the Mithras cult and employ traditions that are not Jewish. The original sin has an Orphic origin (and is thus not Jewish). In a certain sense with the doctrines of sin and atonement by Christ’s sacrificial death, Christians admit the “guilty *primaevae* deed”.²⁴² Something primal is being expressed here as the *n*th variation on a theme.

The final section of *Totem and Taboo* is largely restricted to historical variations and changes. The repression of the primal crime takes a different form each time.²⁴³ Within the framework of variations on how the sense of guilt is worked through, he once again introduced the Oedipus complex. In the Oedipus complex “the beginnings of religion, morals, society and art converge”.²⁴⁴ This position obviously follows from the hypothesis that the sense of guilt is rooted in Oedipal desires and the deeds which result from them. In short, the Oedipus complex is once again included within the exposition on the vicissitudes of the sense of guilt and the origin of morality. For Freud the complex remained primarily the pre-eminent expression of the ambivalence of hate and love as expressed in relationships with people, and indeed specifically with the father figure. Although the Oedipus complex is a nuclear complex, its meaning and effects are variable and change per individual and over time. This is a crucial point, because with this position the complex has a place in history, not beyond it. This is how he corrected his followers’ tendencies in the *Writings in Applied Analysis*.

We have seen that in their applied psychoanalytic work Freud’s followers frequently relied on the section on typical dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and from this standpoint stressed the Oedipus complex as *the* psychoanalytic

²⁴⁰ Compare: “Freud has no theory of gradual evolution from primal events”. Ph. Rieff, *The Mind of the Moralist*, p.228.

²⁴¹ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, pp.153-155.

²⁴² Idem, p.154.

²⁴³ In *Repression* (1915) Freud brought this even more to the fore: “Repression acts in a highly individual manner”. S. Freud, *Repression, SE XIV*, p.150.

²⁴⁴ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.156.

paradigm. In Abraham's *Dream and Myth* and in Jung's *The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual* the Oedipus complex is used as foundational in order to clarify developments. We see thereafter the tendency to apply the Oedipus complex as a blueprint to explain people, art, etc. Freud provided occasion for this use of the Oedipus complex when in *The Interpretation of Dreams* he wrote that every person can recognize his deepest desires in the myth. Yet when he wrote there about a psychoanalyst's work he did not maintain that this was the result of the application of the Oedipus complex as a paradigmatic scheme, but that the analyst's work is comparable to Oedipus' quest for "an ancient guilt". That is exactly what Freud tried to do in *Totem and Taboo*. The question is where morality comes from, what Kant's categorical imperative actually expresses. The answer is that every morality (and religion) is a specific expression of a sense of guilt owing to a primal crime.

With respect to the sense of guilt, there is ultimately a single, succinct conclusion. In comparison with his followers and in the very selective choice of literature (whereby Freud, like Frazer, creatively reworks definition or, as in his reading of Darwin, omits contrary hypotheses) it appears that his most personal contribution in *Totem and Taboo* consists of the central place allotted to the sense of guilt. As regards his followers, that meant a certain relativization of the Oedipus complex and, even more so, the mechanism of projection. From the remaining literature Freud borrowed primarily those elements which strongly supported his ideas about the sense of guilt.

Chapter 5

In the depths

5.1 Introduction

The break between Freud and Jung was definitive. It was not the first rift with a follower – Freud had broken earlier with Alfred Adler – and it would not be the last. Freud’s description of the origins of international psychoanalysis, published in *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement* (1914), included a look back at these two schisms. He first summarized the central principles the study of the neuroses had produced to date again: resistance, transference and the theoretical construct built around repression, the drive theory and the unconscious. It was never his intention to develop a complete theory of the mind; he was concerned with fields of attention. This clashed first with Adler who developed his own closed system which placed total emphasis on the ego drives and neglected the sexual drive.¹ Characteristic of Adler’s system is a *Wille zur Macht* (will to power), an idea which actually meant that individuals calculatingly concentrate on pleasure. And that is exactly what the study of the neuroses had to counteract. Although he is silent here regarding neurotics’ sense of guilt, it is clear that it is that very sense of guilt which conflicted with Adler’s ideas.

After the discussion of Adler came that of Jung, and it is striking which element of the debate is first mentioned: Jung proceeded from the optimistic presumption that humanity had developed along an uninterrupted line, as if reaction formations, attempts at restoration and decline had never existed.² What is the problem with this? That is Jung’s appeal to development and release whereby, as we have seen, Freud became excessively irritated with the defence of religion. He thus spoke with appropriate irony of Jung’s “message of salvation”.³ That was in 1914, when irony was about to turn bitterly serious: the First World War would confirm Freud’s suspicions. Progress is not steady; there is decline, including moral decline. These are cultural data whose origin is psychological.

Incidentally, Freud clearly saw that the Jungian line bore fruit: research produced interesting material on the sublimation of the sexual drives into higher ethical and religious interests. Yet this research into sublimation of the drives derailed when Jung sought to defend religion against being reduced to the Oedipus complex, convinced as he was that this robbed it of its fundamental meaning. It is clear that the Oedipus complex in *Totem and Taboo* and Freud’s emphasis on the actual primal crime were directed at Jung. He reiterated his way of thinking in *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*. He thus once again linked the sense

¹ S. Freud, *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*, pp.50ff.

² Idem, p.59.

³ Idem, p.60.

of guilt with the Oedipus complex. Freud thought that Jung was replacing the Oedipus complex with the conflict between “life task” and “psychical inertia”.⁴ The sense of guilt becomes merely self-reproach when the life task is paid insufficient attention. Otherwise Freud defined his Oedipus complex very broadly here as a conflict between “ego-dystonic erotic trends and the self-preservative ones”, in short between sexual and ego drives.⁵ That broad definition goes together with the idea that the complex itself is not the source of the power from which something develops, but represents a discordant content which in a certain way is in proportion to the individual’s “mental forces”.⁶ The Oedipus complex intrinsically recapitulates a basic individual conflict: drive against drive, love versus hate. The continued effect and meaning of this original complex varies among individuals. With this interpretation of the Oedipus complex Freud avoided what he so vehemently spoke against in *Totem and Taboo*: human development from a single perspective. In addition, this also permitted him to avoid dealing with the fact that the complex is merely symbolic, as with Jung: for Freud man is essentially a being in conflict.

From the preceding we can conclude with confidence that in Freud’s work the sense of guilt and the Oedipus complex are an inseparable duo. In other words, when dealing with the Oedipus complex he always also deals with the sense of guilt. This is something we have already established and Freud confirmed it in his 1914 retrospective. This link remains clear in subsequent years as well. One example of this can be found in *Some Character-Types met with in Psychoanalytic Work*. Here the sense of guilt stems from a conflict between love and hate, the two poles of the Oedipus complex.⁷ A second example is in one of his lectures entitled “The Development of the Libido and the Sexual Organizations”. There Freud discusses the Oedipus myth in detail. Anyone hearing this myth can recognize not only evidence of his deepest desires, but also feel especially guilty about feeling them through understanding that these desires have not been obliterated but live on unconsciously. After all, people feel responsible, and thus guilty, even for unconscious desires. The Oedipus complex is thus also “one of the most important sources of the sense of guilt”, not only among neurotics, but for everyone.⁸ This sense of guilt is consequently the source of religion and morality. These are two examples from the period after *Totem and Taboo*, a period in which the Oedipus complex was only rarely discussed.

The years after the break with Jung are partly characterized by progress in the organization of psychoanalysis, an organization which was made more difficult by

⁴ Idem, p.62.

⁵ Idem.

⁶ Idem, p.63.

⁷ S. Freud, *Some Character-Types met with in Psychoanalytic Work*, SE XIV, pp.328-333. The sense of guilt can also lie at the root of a crime. In that case punishment is usually sought via the crime in order to mitigate the sense of guilt.

⁸ S. Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, SE XVI, p.331-332.

the first schisms and certainly also by the First World War. For Freud, the break with Jung began a period in which he principally tried to unify his psychoanalytic discoveries in a number of theoretical theses concentrating on central concepts, resulting in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (1915), *The Unconscious* (1915) and *Repression* (1915). This period simultaneously saw important innovations within his other theories. In *On Narcissism* (1914), he gave that concept a place, thereby also redefining his drive theory. These themes meant that the sense of guilt appeared for a time no longer to be the focus of his attention despite its centrality in *Totem and Taboo*. That is not to say, however, that the concept fell into obscurity. The theoretical modifications which effect traditionally central concepts – the unconscious, the drives, repression – work subsequently upon other central concepts, such as the sense of guilt and self-reproach. The attention paid to narcissism and the drive theory is, in the end, also an investigation of the roots of the Oedipus complex and the sense of guilt. Although the attention paid to narcissism initially appears to distract from the theme of the sense of guilt, in this chapter we shall see how Freud returned to this theme via the analysis of feelings of hate.

Also noteworthy in the period after the publication of *Totem and Taboo* is the effect and meaning of the Viennese cultural climate and the First World War in particular. Until then Freud had regularly taken a critical view of strict bourgeois morality. Now the situation changed dramatically: for Freud the war unmasked morality, which no longer evinced its hard severity but its weaknesses. Freud was transformed from a critic of an old-fashioned morality into a defender of a new bourgeois decency. At the end of *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement* Freud wrote that psychoanalysis “labours in the depths”⁹, but when this depth explodes and surfaces, as on the battlefield, Freud quickly longed for the time when everything was calmer and “normal”. Despite his earlier critique of bourgeois morality, during the war years Freud pleaded for a new morality, one which could partly be seen as the restoration of the lost bourgeois morality. Given that he also spoke of the sense of guilt in this context, in this chapter I shall pay some attention to this subject.

The third striking thing that took place after *Totem and Taboo* is the gradual disappearance of the concept of self-reproach from Freud’s vocabulary. As we shall see, with few exceptions from this point on he speaks only of a sense of guilt and increasingly often of a feeling of guilt. This is undoubtedly linked to theoretical modifications. These modifications also contain differentiations: he differentiates more systematically than previously between the senses of guilt experienced by an obsessional neurotic, a melancholic and a masochist. It was exactly in this period of theoretical development that he wrote his most impressive case history and in this, too, the sense of guilt plays a significant role. In this chapter I shall explore these themes.

⁹ S. Freud, *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*, p.66.

5.2 *The depth surfaces*

In the period after *Totem and Taboo* Freud took time to theorize and reflect upon his years of clinical experience. This was also the period in which he evinced a clear interest in the dark forces in humans, all those passions which have traditionally been called sins. In the meantime, these dark forces had manifested themselves fully in the world. In the midst of all his reflections upon his own work he did not fail to produce his analyses of patients or his thoughts on civilization. The only great cultural study from this period, however, is Freud's reaction to the First World War: *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*.

Freud's very first reaction to the war was patriotic.¹⁰ This reaction was not unique: the general tendency of the time was one of warm acceptance of the war in the hope of a limited conflict and certain victory. His initial reaction, however, gave way quickly to a very critical position. Not only did the war have immediate, negative consequences¹¹, but his critical position was certainly also determined by war propaganda to which everyone enthusiastically contributed. The enemy was portrayed as inferior barbarians and Freud's own civilization was celebrated as heroically virtuous. *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* begins with a robust critique of the scientists in Freud's direct environment who rendered the enemy as degenerates and mentally ill: evil is not only "there", but also "here".¹² Based on this critique he wrote an argument in two parts, one on the disillusionment of the war and another on the attitude towards death.

The disillusionment naturally concerned a highly civilized society which ought to encourage people to refrain from all kinds of impulse satisfaction. Since Freud could remember this culture had always viewed moral norms as incontestable and now suddenly the mask fell away. His disillusionment has a strong biographical tint. Thus he wrote about the progress of foreigners who moved in order to live in a highly civilized country and enjoy its bounty. There is no doubt he was referring to his own origins and early relocation to Vienna. In fact he was expressing his love for the city here.¹³ Yet a certain cynicism rings through: for decades he had been a critic of an excessively strict morality and a culture that too strongly discouraged instinctual satisfaction. He had been a critic for years, but without much result and now suddenly when the war broke out all norms fell away.

The greatest disappointment had to do with the observation that this war was just as horrific as all those which had preceded it. Individual consciences were evidently not incorruptible when society absolved them of a sense of guilt: this permitted evil to manifest itself. "Illusions spare us unpleasurable feelings" and

¹⁰ "Like his followers, Freud for a time indulged himself in partisan credulity, as cheerful, even triumphant bulletins kept pouring in from the front." P. Gay, *Freud*, p.349.

¹¹ Some of these consequences are: Freud's sons join the army, correspondence with his followers gets more complicated and the number of conferences decline, as do the number of patients. *Idem*, p.350.

¹² S. Freud, *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, *SE XIV*, pp.275ff.

¹³ *Idem*, p.277.

thus also sense of guilt.¹⁴ But every illusion eventually founders upon facts. The great illusion of bourgeois culture is indeed that it believed in its own moral progress. This culture was doomed to failure, just like every illusion. This critique is naturally also directed at that part of Darwinistic cultural inheritance with which he had the greatest difficulty: the idea of progress, the development of individuals and culture to a higher plain.¹⁵

Should the illusion exist that man is by nature “good”, then the war demonstrated otherwise, and the same is true for the idea that an increase in civilization led to people being increasingly “inclined towards being good”. “In reality” human nature consists of drives which are neither good nor evil.¹⁶ During a long development which included inhibitions, displacements, fusions and variations of objects, the drives are more strongly determined and channelled and give rise to disillusionments, such as selfish versus altruistic or cruel versus compassionate, disillusionments which stem from the diffuse source of emotional ambivalences. A person is sometimes good and then bad, but never just one of these.¹⁷ Someone who as a child was very selfish or cruel is later often a self-effacing or compassionate citizen. This kind of shift is based upon two factors. The first is internal: whenever selfish urges are influenced by erotic feelings social drives develop. Being loved and loving others is now seen as an advantage. We have encountered this initial factor put forward by Freud before. It is the Hobbesian ethic that selfishness is best served by altruism. The second factor is external: the coercion in child-rearing supported by the cultural environment. Culture is founded on renunciation of the drives and continues to demand renunciations. Freud’s analysis of the categorical imperative resounds here as does the entire argument of *Totem and Taboo* designed to fathom that imperative.¹⁸

These considerations of the two ethical factors are a short account of Freud’s thoughts on this subject to that point. The subsequent developments in Freud’s work reveal shifts with regard to these two factors. After his break with Adler and Jung, and increasingly more clearly after *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud emphasized more strongly that human drives are not exclusively directed towards gaining an advantage. He simultaneously increasingly emphasized the formation of the conscience via identification. This shift was announced in *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, where he noted that as morality was lost, raw forms of hate and disgust surfaced. The question this calls forth is: how

¹⁴ Idem, p.280.

¹⁵ Compare S. Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern*, pp.248-273. Zweig did not write about illusion but about a “naïve romantic optimism” that led to “orgies of hate”.

¹⁶ S. Freud, *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, pp.281-282.

¹⁷ Compare: “I do not break my head very much about good and evil, but I have found little that is ‘good’ about human beings on the whole.” S. Freud, O. Pfister, *Psychoanalysis and Faith*, pp.61-62.

¹⁸ S. Freud, *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, p.282. In the order of time the external factor precedes the internal factor which means that “throughout an individual’s life there is a constant replacement of external by internal compulsion”.

can morality be so easily lost? The analysis of feelings of hate which Freud took so seriously just at this time employed utility as a principle for discussion. The war had shown that people could indeed act against their own best interests. The war additionally made clear that “good” is not innate.¹⁹

Against the background of a culture based on drive renunciation Freud now spoke about individual and social perspectives on death. Just as culture is based upon the illusion of progress and benevolence, so too is the attitude towards death an illusion. People are fundamentally convinced of their own immortality even while death is a fact of life. Put another way, from the argument on recognizing our drives, both good and bad, as facts, he now spoke about death as a fact which is repressed by the illusion of immortality. The great problem of the bourgeois illusion that death can be ignored is that this negation makes life itself flat and uninteresting and that this repression of death eventually leads to neuroses.²⁰

The war, however, demonstrated that death could no longer be banished from a safe, bourgeois life. Life during wartime – Freud dealt not with soldiers, but with those who stayed behind – demands a new attitude towards death. In order to find such a new attitude he wanted to examine death in the life of primitive man and death as repressed by people. Harking back to *Totem and Taboo*, Freud stated anew an explanation for culture as the repression of anti-social drives.²¹ Primitive man was very ambivalent towards death. Towards strangers and enemies he was murderous and he killed easily. Yet on the other hand primitive man was also aware of his own mortality, chiefly when confronted by the death of a loved one. The emotional conflict here is clear: loved ones are after all also partly strangers and enemies (rivals) and thus his own bloodthirstiness extended (partly) to them. It was this bloodthirstiness which fuelled the primal murder of the father: “the obscure sense of guilt to which mankind has been subject since prehistoric times is probably the outcome of a blood-guilt”. It was this sense of guilt, condensed in religion as original sin, that he had tried to analyse.²²

With regard to those loved or hated, the emotional conflict stems from a sense of guilt which extends to “regular” enemies and strangers. This situation also generates the belief in immortality: primitive man is aware of his mortality (via the death of loved ones), but resists death as an annihilation of life. The compromise is the belief in spirits of loved ones which are transformed into evil demons by the sense of guilt. Thus a doctrine of the soul, belief in immortality, a sense of guilt

¹⁹ The belief in the innate good is regarded an “illusion to which we had given away”. Freud adds: “In reality our fellow-citizens have not sunk so low as we feared, because they had never risen so high as we believed”. This “in reality” indicates that Freud can neither be called a pessimist nor an optimist. Idem, p.285.

²⁰ Idem, pp.289-291.

²¹ Idem, p.292.

²² Idem.

and also the first prohibitions, the very first and most important of which is: “Thou shalt not kill”, arose next to the body of a loved one.²³

From primitive man to the bourgeois unconscious was not a great step for Freud: in both one finds the same attitude towards death. Unconsciously, people do not believe in their own mortality. Fear of death is thus a secondary phenomenon stemming from a sense of guilt.²⁴ Yet there is a crucial difference between modern and primitive man: primitive man actually murdered whereas modern man merely desires someone else dead. Nevertheless, in both the same ground for ambivalence of feelings can be detected: loved ones are “an inner possession, components of our ego” but also “partly strange, even enemies”.²⁵ Although this conflict does not generate a new doctrine of the soul or ethics each time, it does generate a neurosis under pressure of an exaggerated sense of guilt. In short, modern man is just as convinced of his own immortality as was primitive man, is just as bloodthirsty against an enemy and just as ambivalent toward loved ones.²⁶

The war brought man’s primitivism to the surface. Strangers became once again enemies who had to be destroyed and belief in one’s own immortality (through heroism) was once again validated. Of course all this, two sides of the same coin, is undesirable; it is better to accept one’s own mortality as a fact. It goes without saying that Freud pleaded for the conscious, rational handling of ambivalent feelings, but this is likewise an argument for the most important commandment: “Thou shalt not kill”. The combination of these two is the best guarantee for a civilized culture, and that’s what he was after.

Freud thus presented at the end of this study his own “categorical imperative” in the sense that he desired – nay, demanded – that his fellow citizens recognized their mortality and thereby obeyed the commandment “Thou shalt not kill”. Utilitarian thinking can mean holding onto life-threatening illusions and thus “to tolerate life remains the first duty of all living beings”.²⁷ With these final remarks, Freud in his own way took leave of his illusions of bourgeois culture, or put another way, of bourgeois culture as an illusion. This obviously does not mean that culture is impossible, however – it is possible without excessive repression. An understanding of the constant presence of “evil” natural forces is thus a prerequisite and a certain degree of sense of guilt is part of this.

Freud’s interest in the mind’s dark forces was, as we shall presently see, clearly part of his theoretical work on drives, narcissism and existing theories concerning

²³ Idem, p.296.

²⁴ Idem, p.297.

²⁵ Idem, p.298. This formulation shows the influence of the narcissism theory and of the ideas on melancholic identification with a love-object. In his correspondence with Lou Andreas-Salomé, Freud explicitly links themes elaborated upon in *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* (the illusion of heroism and immortality, the hate towards enemies) to narcissism. S. Freud, L. Andreas-Salomé, *Sigmund Freud. Lou Andreas-Salomé. Briefwechsel*, E. Pfeiffer (ed.), Fischer, Frankfurt, 1966, p.33.

²⁶ S. Freud, *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, p.299.

²⁷ Idem.

obsessional neuroses. We must not, however, lose sight of the intellectual-cultural climate of Vienna. Biographers have portrayed the First World War as the backdrop for Freud's theoretical work in a period which demonstrated a greater interest in aggressive tendencies.²⁸ I would like to point out another background. It is, after all, also the period of an increasingly developed expressionism which had its roots in the period preceding the First World War and was subsequently nourished by that war and the downfall of the Habsburg Empire. In the Viennese art world elementary human passions which had initially been concealed were emancipated and increasingly bared for all to see. This expressionism was strongly anti-bourgeois and had a predilection for displaying the most deeply destructive of human powers. It is thus not strange that a greater interest in psychoanalysis arose just at this time.²⁹ This age is characterized by a certain cross-pollination of ideas. Freud's attention to narcissism, hate, love and masochism can also be set against the background of that cultural climate. It was a period in which the "depth" manifested itself not only on Europe's battlefields, but also on Viennese stages.

Though Freud had little interest in modern art³⁰, this world also found its way into his writings; *The Uncanny* from 1919 is the best evidence of this. It is about an analysis of the awakening of terror, fear and horror in aesthetics, as can be seen in the work of, *inter alia*, Oscar Wilde.³¹ Indeed, Wilde as an author was loved by expressionists, as evidenced by for example Franz Schreker's *Die Gezeichneten* and Alexander von Zemlinsky's operas *Eine Florentinische Tragödie* and *Der Zwerg*. The latter two were based on Wilde stories in which the hateful, cruel and nasty were portrayed as essential aspects of human nature.³² The Freudians too paid attention to Wilde. In a 1912 article by Rank on narcissism (see below), he defined the term using extensive references to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in which, according to Rank, Wilde actually mapped narcissism.³³ Here we see literature supporting psychoanalytic theory: Wilde was seen as the modern discoverer of narcissism.³⁴

²⁸ P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.342ff; A. Meyhöfer, *Eine Wissenschaft des Träumens*, pp.437ff.

²⁹ Stefan Zweig noticed that expressionism welcomed Freudian psychoanalysis because Freud could be regarded as a critic of "moral conventions", as someone who fought against the illusions of bourgeois society. S. Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern*, p.477. See also A. Meyhöfer, *Eine Wissenschaft des Träumens*, pp.236-237.

³⁰ *Idem*, p.236.

³¹ S. Freud, *The Uncanny*, *SE XVII*, p.252.

³² See A. Beaumont, *Zemlinsky*, Faber and Faber, London, 2000, pp.298-309.

³³ O. Rank, "Ein Beitrag zum Narzissismus", in *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und Psychopathologische Forschungen* 3 (1912), pp.401-426.

³⁴ Wilde's ideas on narcissism in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are later discussed again by Rank in O. Rank, *Der Doppelgänger. Eine psychoanalytische Studie*, Internationaler psychoanalytischer Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna, Zurich, 1925.

5.3 *The downfall of self-reproach*

We began chapter one with the assertion that Freud treated self-reproach and the sense of guilt as synonyms. He explicitly stated as late as the Rat Man case that these two concepts were interchangeable. This was also so in *Totem and Taboo*, but thereafter, in the period of theoretical recapitulations and innovations, he suddenly differentiated between these two terms. He continued to link the concept of self-reproach to his theory of melancholia, however. His interest in melancholia (or melancholic depression) was not new but had never been systematically worked out. Until that point, for Freud melancholia was an extension of the obsessive neuroses and thus by and large what was valid for these was valid for melancholia.³⁵

Freud had discovered early on that all kinds of aggressive, sadistic urges in humans could be lived out in fantasy or in reality. They are targeted at hated and loved people and sometimes also at the person himself. In obsessional neuroses they are defended against and repressed only to resurface as a sense of guilt and in all kinds of subsequent compromise ideas. The obsessional neurosis was thus the best example of the drives turned against oneself as a sense of guilt, contentious compulsive thoughts and compulsive acts. The obsessional neurosis is not the only pathology to which aggressive drives are (partly) directed against oneself, however. In *Three Essays* he puts forward that masochism has its origin in a conversion of sadism. Masochism is “an extension of sadism turned round upon the subject’s own self”.³⁶ Melancholia is a third form of aggression against oneself. The three pathologies have in common the redirection of aggression inwards which leads to inner conflict. It is thus the extension of his interest in obsessional neuroses and the fate of the aggressive drives which lay behind his interest in melancholia and masochism after *Totem and Taboo* and his attempt to clearly differentiate them from obsessional neuroses and from each other.

Freud’s ideas on melancholia are formulated in *Mourning and Melancholia*. His work here dovetailed with the preparatory work done by Karl Abraham in 1912.³⁷ Abraham’s central proposition can be summarized as follows: melancholia, anxiety and self-reproach stem from the repression of sadism.³⁸ Which pathology (melancholia, obsessional neurosis, masochism) manifests itself depends principally on the goal and object of the drives. Given that the drive seeks satisfaction, each of the pathologies also contains a certain experience of desire even in the deepest of melancholia. However, it is clear here that he did not get any further than establishing similarities. He had no explanation for the differences and he recognized this when he wrote to Freud in 1915 that he was having difficulties

³⁵ S. Freud, *Draft N*, p.257.

³⁶ S. Freud, *Three Essays*, p.158.

³⁷ K. Abraham, “Ansätze zur psychoanalytischen Erforschung und Behandlung des manisch-depressiven Irreseins und verwandter Zustände”, in *Psychoanalytische Studien. Band II*, pp.146-162.

³⁸ *Idem*, p.154.

with formulating his theories. For Abraham the borders between obsessional neuroses, melancholia and masochism appeared fluid.³⁹

It is this lack of terminological clarity that is Freud's point of departure in *Mourning and Melancholia*. Remarkably, he did not seek to differentiate melancholia from obsessional neurosis and masochism, but from mourning. The hallmark of melancholia is loss: it is characterized by "cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment."⁴⁰ It is not strange that he pays attention to mourning, remorse (Freud uses the term *Reue* for both) and loss. In *Totem and Taboo* Freud introduced this theme in connection with the patricide. This murder not only killed a rival but was also the loss of a loved one. The son-horde mourned this and showed their remorse in the form of an enduring sense of guilt.⁴¹ This thought naturally begs the question whether mourning and loss always come with a sense of guilt. *Mourning and Melancholia* provides an answer: no. Mourning is a normal phenomenon: a loved one is lost and can no longer be loved in the same way. The relationship with the deceased loved one can only be continued mentally, not in reality. The conversion, the mourning, takes a great deal of effort, but can be accomplished with time and then, generally speaking, the person is once again free and uninhibited.

Melancholia too is about loss, and indeed the loss of a love object, but what differentiates depression from mourning (and remorse) is "an extraordinary diminution in his self-regard" (*Selbstgefühl*).⁴² Someone who is melancholic characterizes himself as morally reprehensible and reproaches themselves. This disturbance of one's self-regard is typical of melancholia. This then is also the riddle that must be solved: how can the loss of a love object result in such diminution? In order to gain insight into this problem, Freud took as his point of departure the observation that a melancholic person has in his ego a critic opposed to the other part of his ego. That critic is the conscience.⁴³ What struck Freud secondly was that the self-reproach which comes from that conscience and is directed at one's own ego is often not applicable to the person himself, but appears rather to refer to the lost love object.⁴⁴ Freud's observation here was that although conscientious self-reproach often manifests itself in dutiful people, the content of

³⁹ In a 1915 letter responding to Freud's *On Narcissism*, Abraham points out that until the appearance of Freud's text there was no clear psychoanalytic distinction between melancholia, obsessional neurosis and sadism. S. Freud, K. Abraham, *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue*, pp.215-218.

⁴⁰ S. Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, SE XIV, p.244.

⁴¹ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.141.

⁴² S. Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, p.246.

⁴³ In one of his 1917 lectures Freud calls this conscience a critical topic that measures the "actual ego" to an "ideal ego". This conscience is further formed through identification with model figures (parents, educators). S. Freud, *Introductory Lectures*, p.429.

⁴⁴ S. Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, p.248.

the self-reproach has a greater bearing on general human characteristics (selfish tendencies, dishonesty). The self-reproach is in fact an indictment against general human failures concretely attributed to the lost love object. The relationship of someone who is melancholic to the love object is not only characterized by love, but also by disappointment. When the object is lost, the libido retreats into the ego and is there used to bring about an identification with the object. Disappointment in the object is transformed into disappointment with the ego. In short, the melancholic's self-reproach is based on identification with a disappointing and lost love object.⁴⁵ The conflict with the loved person, the ambivalent feelings, becomes an inner conflict via identification.⁴⁶

Freud subsequently specified this identification as narcissistic. One can actually speak of regression in melancholia: narcissism, in which a person identifies with himself, is at the root of every subsequent object choice.⁴⁷ Now that the object has been lost, the melancholic person falls back on that mechanism. This is an essential difference between melancholia and obsessional neurosis. An obsessional neurosis can also arise after the loss of a love object, but the consequence is then the self-reproach of the obsessional neurotic who believes himself guilty for that loss. In this, says Freud, we do not see a regression to narcissism. The considerable resemblance between the two is that in both pathologies sadistic tendencies are (partially) satisfied, either as hate towards the loved one or towards oneself. In melancholia a delicious revenge is taken on the lost love via self-reproach.⁴⁸ "I accuse myself and thereby accuse the disappointing other." This definition also exemplifies the difference with obsessional neurosis. After all, obsessional neurosis includes a sense of guilt on account of the hostile wishes against another person that has not been internalized by narcissistic identification. "I accuse myself because of my hostile wishes against a loved other."

The link between self-reproach and melancholia also signifies the ruin of the term. In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* Freud once again repeated his ideas on melancholia.⁴⁹ He never uses the term self-reproach thereafter.

⁴⁵ Thys has described this process as a transition from "having" an object to "being" the object (in which the object loses the status of object). M. Thys, *Fascinatie. Een fenomenologisch-psychoanalytische verkenning van het onmenselijke*, Uitgeverij Boom, Amsterdam, 2006, p.158.

⁴⁶ Idem, p.249. Michael Turnheim has argued convincingly that as in Freud's elaborations on death in *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* melancholia has something to do with death and illusion, namely the illusion that the dead loved one can live on through identification. In other words, there is a denial of mortality. M. Turnheim, *Das Andere im Gleichen. Über Trauer, Witz und Politik*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 1999, pp.62-63.

⁴⁷ S. Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, p.248.

⁴⁸ According to Freud, this sadism of the melancholic is the key to understand self punishment and even suicide in melancholia. Albeit that the primal state of the drives includes ego maintenance (the "ego's self-love"), the melancholic can commit suicide when he identifies with the lost love object. Idem, p.252.

⁴⁹ S. Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, SE XVIII, p.109.

5.4 “The youth sees himself as an idol”

When Freud developed his theory of melancholia in *Mourning and Melancholia* he had already introduced the term narcissism and thereby also achieved an important revision of his earlier insights. An important reason for this revision was without a doubt the conflict with Jung and Freud’s attempt to develop a theory which could explain schizophrenia.⁵⁰ Yet the introduction to *On Narcissism* also reveals another reason why Freud wanted to explore the term. Narcissism is not a perversion, but rather “the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation”.⁵¹ Narcissism is thus a general human developmental stage in which egoism (from the ego drive) comes to completion. This, in my opinion, means nothing other than what Freud in *Totem and Taboo* called the constitution of the ego when he presented the term narcissism.⁵² Narcissism as the completion of egoism means that the ego drives are taken up libidinally, that an individual experiences himself as a single bodily unit and makes himself into a love object.⁵³ To be more precise, the libidinal investment in the own body marks the stage in development in which auto-erotism reaches its climax: the first experience an own identity is not an experience of having a body, but of being a body. The completion of this egoism (in a bodily unity) is now a developmental stage and that means that the term is definitively freed from a moral judgment. Although egoism is thus neither good nor bad, it remains for Freud the basis of morality and the sense of guilt. The history of the origin of the term narcissism is illustrative here.

According to Freud, Paul Näcke, a psychiatrist in Colditz, introduced the term in an 1899 article.⁵⁴ In that article, however, Näcke referred to Havelock Ellis who in *Autoerotism* used the term narcissism to represent the most extreme form of autoerotism: the emotional condition of being completely engrossed in self-wonder or self-love.⁵⁵ In fact, Näcke follows Ellis’s argument and thus also introduces the term narcissism, self-infatuation, after having dealt with erotic daydreams, nocturnal orgasms and onanism. Narcissism is in fact a term that

⁵⁰ In *Mourning and Melancholia* Freud speaks of schizophrenia, a term introduced by the psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler (Jung’s colleague at the Burghölzli) to indicate a certain group of psychoses Ernst Kraepelin had dubbed “dementia praecox”. Hence the term “schizophrenia” referred to the research on psychoses conducted at the Burghölzli and thus to Jung.

⁵¹ S. Freud, *On Narcissism: An Introduction*, SE XIV, pp.73-74.

⁵² S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.89.

⁵³ J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, pp.261-263; P. Vandermeersch, “Het narcisme. De psychoanalytische theorie en haar lotgevallen”, in J. Huijts (ed.), “*Ik zei de gek*”. *Tussen zelf-ontkenning en zelf-verheerlijking*, Ambo, Baarn, 1983, pp.31-56 (35ff).

⁵⁴ P. Näcke, “Kritisches zum Kapitäl der normalen und pathologischen Sexualität”, in *Archiv für Psychiatrie und Nervenkrankheiten* 32 (1899), pp.356-386. On the intellectual context of *On Narcissism* see R.H. Etchegoyen, ““On Narcissism: An Introduction”: Text and Context”, in J. Sandler, E. Spector Person, P. Fonagy (eds.), *Freud’s “On narcissism: An Introduction”*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1991, pp.54-74.

⁵⁵ H. Ellis, *Auto-erotism*, p.162, p.206.

borders on vanity, but it is more clearly coupled with “the signs of an orgasm” and can thereby be called “mental onanism”.

In this article Näcke attempted to assess the influence of genital organization on the development of the ego thereby making as clear a difference as possible between a normal influence on the ego complex, the personality, and a pathological influence. Näcke, who is very careful about deriving pathologies from onanism, unlike Krafft-Ebing, emphasized onanism’s moment of origin. His position is simple: the earlier onanism begins the greater the chance of pathology. Onanism not infrequently originates from seduction by another (compare Freud’s seduction theory), but more important still is degeneration: degenerates masturbate early and often. He thus suggests that this early onanism probably also has an effect on the choice of sexual object. Marriage is also normal for him and homosexuality an abnormality, although he pleaded for a freer morality in this case.

The question now is what Näcke understood by the ego complex and by degeneration. Elucidation can be found in Näcke’s 1902 *On the so-called “moral insanity”* in which he follows Meynert’s differentiation between a primary and secondary ego.⁵⁶ The primary ego is selfish in nature and dedicated to reproduction and self-preservation. It is often encountered in a strong form in children and primitive people. Higher affects stem from the primary ego, but are elevated and more complicated. They are found in civilized adults. This general outline can also be applied to morality. Morality is initially selfish and directed to the individual’s benefit. Altruism develops from this when an individual notes that this is useful to himself. Observation, especially of criminals, has taught us that these too often wind up on the wrong path at an early stage and Näcke also maintains that in many criminals primary egoism is not conquered by secondary altruism and the formation of a conscience. He once again called on Havelock Ellis, who had previously referred to the “moral insensibility of the instinctive criminal” which he saw as the “cause of his cruelty”.⁵⁷ This “moral insensibility” has two origins: hereditary degeneration and social environment. Näcke adopted this from Havelock Ellis and then moved on to a description of two basic forms of moral degeneration: an active and a passive. The passive form is characterized by “every moral maxim goes in one ear and out the other”. The active form is chiefly characterized by a desire for cruelty and intrigue, rage attacks, etc. This degeneration can later develop into criminal behaviour. In general it is true that “the youth sees himself as an idol”, an idol that others must worship. The idea of grandeur is generally expressed in a “limitless vanity and overestimation of the self”: “He wants and must rule”. He hates those who resist or fail to recognize him, the *Übermensch*. He only acts in accordance with his own moral framework.⁵⁸ The egoist, the primary ego, the

⁵⁶ P. Näcke, *Über die sogenannte “moral insanity”*, in *Grenzfragen des Nerven- und Seelenlebens*, L. Löwenfeld, H. Kurella (eds.), Verlag Bergmann, Wiesbaden, 1902.

⁵⁷ H. Ellis, *The Criminal*, Walter Scott, London, 1890, p.91, p.130.

⁵⁸ P. Näcke, *Über die sogenannte “moral insanity”*, p.24.

Übermensch here contrasts with the development of altruism, the secondary ego, a conscience formed by moral education. The *Übermensch* here also contrasts with culture and by culture Näcke naturally meant a civilized culture. Although Näcke did not speak about narcissism in this study of chiefly criminal behaviour, this concept was clearly present when he wrote about the youth who saw himself as an idol: the *Übermensch* wallows in vanity. In other words, what Näcke calls narcissism, the culmination of auto-erotism, is as a phenomenon part of the egoistic drives which are a person's fundamental characteristics. And indeed, if not conquered, this constituted for Näcke a pathology or a perversion.

Isidor Sadger, one of Freud's followers, took up the subject of narcissism in 1910. In the case of a married homosexual man his interpretation dovetails directly with Näcke.⁵⁹ Sadger extensively describes the early sexual interests of a man he was treating therapeutically including his relationship with his parents, what it was like to grow up among women, heredity, all of which ultimately led him to the conclusion that the man's complaints stemmed from a degeneration which was negatively influenced by sexual factors. For Sadger, homosexuality was part of the entirety of the man's complaints and thus also pathological in nature. When he explained his theory of the origin of homosexuality, he appeared to be a faithful follower of Freud's. Although Freud had suggested in *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood* and *On Narcissism* that Sadger had introduced him to the term narcissism, in this case Sadger wrote that he had adopted Freud's thoughts on the subject in order to reach a sound theory. Narcissism is "the love for one's own ego" or "infatuation with one's own person". It is not, as is the case with Ellis and Näcke, a rare phenomenon but a general human phenomenon, a necessary developmental phase between auto-erotism and object love. Nevertheless, for Sadger homosexuality was a perversion, a disorder. He put it as follows: "Man has two original sexual objects, the mother and himself. In order to remain healthy he must be liberated from both." Homosexuals have freed themselves from their mothers by identifying with them, but "do not know how to free themselves from themselves".⁶⁰ Thereafter Sadger nonetheless reported that his treatment of the man was successful. The patient reported that he was "an incorrigible egoist", but now "felt better". In so doing Sadger came very close to Näcke's theory of narcissism as self-love which is egoistic in nature and must be conquered.

Freud himself described homosexuality as a "slip back to auto-erotism". Homosexuals find their love object via narcissism, that is to say, via their "own reflection".⁶¹ As indicated earlier, here Freud relied on Sadger, but with the major difference that for Freud homosexuality was not a pathology or a perversion. In 1911 he once again devoted attention to narcissism and homosexuality, this time

⁵⁹ I. Sadger, "Ein Fall von multipler Perversion mit hysterischen Absenzen", in *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und Psychopathologische Forschungen* 2 (1910), pp.59-133.

⁶⁰ Idem, p.112, Compare also I. Sadger, *Neue Forschungen zur Homosexualität*, Berliner Klinik, Berlin, 1915, p.8.

⁶¹ S. Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci*, p.100.

in the Schreber case.⁶² Here, too, narcissism and a homosexual object choice are normal developmental stages which can be followed by a heterosexual object choice, but not without a positive working through of the homosexual object choice. It is then sublimated in friendship and even as a general love of humankind.

In the Schreber case Freud definitively chose the term *Narzißmus* and not *Narzissismus*, a term introduced by Otto Rank. In a 1912 article Rank described that term and took as his point of departure Ellis's and Näcke's work.⁶³ Rank clearly linked narcissism with egoism again. Narcissism is "infatuation with one's own body" or "infatuation with one's own person", a variant on Näcke's self-infatuation. Rank also connected narcissism with homosexual object choice. Such a choice is a rejection of a heterosexual object choice and a regression to an earlier stage of narcissism. The formula which Rank used here was: "the best thing I can do is to love myself". This attitude was manifest in increased egoism or otherwise expressed by a "narcissistic-egoistic wish".⁶⁴ In so doing Rank preserved Näcke's link between narcissism and egoism.

5.5 Self-regard

The developments recounted above make it understandable that Freud worked out the term narcissism in 1914 and called it "the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation". Narcissism is no longer a self-infatuation which can be condemned, but a necessary developmental stage. Only thereafter can a sexual interest arise in other objects outside the person himself, outside his own body. Two questions are central to the narcissism study: what is the relationship between auto-erotism and narcissism, and is it still necessary to differentiate ego from sexual drives when one is dealing with the libido in narcissism?

These questions were important to Freud. One topical reason for him to elaborate on narcissism stemmed from an attempt to interpret schizophrenia.⁶⁵ In schizophrenia a person abandons his libidinous relationship with reality. The libido is then withdrawn into the ego to form a narcissistic relationship. These general thoughts naturally beg clarification of the term ego. Another reason to explore narcissism comes from *Totem and Taboo* and the central place Freud gave the omnipotence of thought among children and primitives.⁶⁶ As we have seen, for him the omnipotence of thought was an attempt to come to grips with all kinds of ambivalent feelings and conflicts. For exactly this reason the term narcissism also became a weapon in the battle against Jung (and Adler).

⁶² S. Freud, *Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia*, p.61.

⁶³ O. Rank, "Ein Beitrag zum Narzissismus".

⁶⁴ Idem, pp.414-415.

⁶⁵ S. Freud, *On Narcissism*, pp.74-75.

⁶⁶ Idem, pp.75-76.

These are the reasons Freud himself supplied, but that should not stop us from placing the term narcissism in a somewhat broader context. From the beginning of his psychoanalytic work Freud considered the analysis of the individual central. He was always concerned with the individual in relation to himself and in relation to the external world. The interest in homosexuality, for example, emerges clearly not only in his study of narcissism, but also in *“Civilized” Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness*. We are not only dealing here with how a homosexual relates to himself, i.e. with what a homosexual ego, as it were, could be, but also with the vicissitudes of that ego in a culture which requires repression. The two cannot be viewed separately: a homosexual in fin-de-siècle Vienna was “inwardly inhibited and outwardly paralysed”.⁶⁷ This example is telling. It was in the fin-de-siècle that the individual became central; this period saw the recognition and increasingly the expression of deeper emotions and of the Schopenhauerian will as common good (at least in the upper classes). Rieff speaks of a time of individual emancipation in his battle with social pressures, Gödde of an “ego cult”.⁶⁸ In other words, the concept of narcissism permitted Freud to make progress in charting the individual in its social environment. It is thus not odd that in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* he began with narcissism in order to analyse relationships with other people and society. Narcissism is a stage in which the ego matures and reaches its apogee, but it is also the stage in which the basis is laid for every later object relationships. Narcissism is of interest to us for exactly this reason: it is essentially selfish, but also the substrate for identification, the formation of the conscience and thus also for the development of the sense of guilt.

Until this moment Freud had always distinguished between sexual and ego drives, which he also called egoistic drives on a few occasions. However, the narcissism study revealed that no such differentiation can be made: in cases of self-infatuation, the two cannot be distinguished. Given that narcissism is a general, human developmental stage, meant that a revision of the drive theory was due. Yet no theory towards Jung’s concept of libido was forthcoming⁶⁹; instead a new differentiation (in addition to those already extant) between the ego-libido and the object-libido appeared.⁷⁰ No longer was the goal central (sexual satisfaction/species or self preservation), but the libidinous object.

Most important to us here is that Freud linked narcissism to repression. The theory was: sexual drives are repressed when they come into conflict with the

⁶⁷ S. Freud, *“Civilized” Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness*, p.190.

⁶⁸ Ph. Rieff, *The Mind of the Moralist*, p.175; G. Gödde, *Traditionslinien des “Unbewußten”*, p.242.

⁶⁹ In his Freud biography Jones mentions that at first the theory on narcissism did intrigue Freud’s followers because they thought he was aiming at a monistic libidinal conception of the mind. E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 2*, p.303. On the other hand, Abraham showed immediate enthusiasm for this theory. The differentiation between a pressing conscience and sublimation might be a weapon against Jung: Jung’s insistence on sublimation because of a life-task would then be nothing other than a strengthening of conscience, which might actually inhibit sublimation. S. Freud, K. Abraham, *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue*, p.169.

⁷⁰ S. Freud, *On Narcissism*, p.76.

“subject’s cultural and ethical ideas”.⁷¹ Repression thus begins with the ego, or rather with what he called “the self-respect of the ego”.⁷² By this he meant that an individual erected an ideal for himself, an image of himself which, if everything works correctly, is what he wants to be and against which he measures himself. That ego ideal is initially the narcissistic image of himself, the image with which one is infatuated. When object relations are developed from narcissism, that ideal can be linked with an object other than oneself via sublimation or idealization.⁷³ The ideal places high demands on the ego and is the most powerful motor behind repression. The critical agency which always measures the ego against the ego ideal is the conscience. Freud did not specify here the exact origin of conscience, but did note that it is strongly influenced by the critical influence of parents and others.⁷⁴ In a 1917 lecture he repeated these ideas and added that the influence of parents, educators and the social environment work via the mechanism of “identification with model figures”.⁷⁵ Although he did not state as much in 1915, identification became a key concept in the understanding of how the ego is constructed.

The relationship of the ego to the ego ideal determined what he now called “self-regard”.⁷⁶ Where the libido is withdrawn from objects into itself, as in schizophrenia, self-regard increases. Where the ego loses control over the sexual drive which conflicts with the ego ideal, as in neuroses, self-regard decreases. The introduction of the term self-regard (*Selbstgefühl*), a term which is in fact determined by the vicissitudes of the narcissistic libido, is important here because in the period after *Totem and Taboo* Freud increasingly used the concept of feeling of guilt (*Schuldgefühl*) as a synonym for consciousness of guilt (*Schuldbewußtsein*). One of the reasons to increasingly talk about feeling of guilt lies in the concept of self-regard. In fact, *Schuldgefühl* is the pendant of *Selbstgefühl*. Whenever self-regard is high, there is a dearth of feelings of guilt. However, when self-regard is low, as in neuroses, feelings of guilt are likely to be high.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Idem, p.93.

⁷² Idem.

⁷³ Idem, p.94. Freud now defines sublimation as “a process that concerns object-libido and consists in the instinct’s directing itself towards an aim other than, and remote from, that of sexual satisfaction”. Sublimation thus seems to indicate every process of desexualization. The relation with social values is no longer apparent. Further reflections on the issue are not made here. I thus agree with Laplanche and Pontalis when they write: *la théorie de la sublimation est restée, chez Freud, peu élaborée*. J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, p.466.

⁷⁴ S. Freud, *On Narcissism*, p.96; M. Vansina, *Het super-ego*, pp.150-165. It should be noted here that Freud not only links conscience formation with the influence of the parents, but more importantly with the ego ideal itself. The task of the conscience is first of all ensuring narcissistic satisfaction (being one’s own ideal). Idem, p.151; J.-M. Quinodoz, *Reading Freud*, p.131.

⁷⁵ S. Freud, *Introductory Lectures*, p.429.

⁷⁶ S. Freud, *On Narcissism*, p.98.

⁷⁷ This idea was later elaborated upon by Theodor Reik. He describes feeling of guilt as the opposite of self-regard and the sign of a narcissistic disorder. Th. Reik, *Geständniszwang und Strafbedürfnis. Probleme der Psychoanalyse und der Kriminologie*, Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna, Zurich, 1925, pp.81-82. See also M. Vansina, *Het super-ego*, pp.173-174.

5.6 Feelings of hate

We have seen that in the Rat Man case Freud traced the sense of guilt to sadistic components of the drives. Hate and love were originally poles apart in the drives. With the introduction of narcissism and modification in the drive theory the question became where to locate the source of the sense of guilt. In *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* he formulated an answer to this question: sadistic tendencies are not originally innate and are also not linked to auto-erotism; Sadistic tendencies (toward others) arise only with narcissism when ego and sexual drives can be directed at a single object.⁷⁸

In *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* Freud described the origin of love and hate. Love arises from the possibility of freeing up part of the auto-erotic drive from the ego. Love stems, as it were, from the sexual drives which are organized within narcissism: the first love object is oneself.⁷⁹ It is only by starting from this primary narcissism that love can be differentiated from hate: within auto-erotism love and hate cannot be differentiated. The drives are directed at need satisfaction, but that aside we are working here without a distinct loved or hated object. Only when genital organization arises within narcissism and an ego, a consciousness of one's own identity, is constructed is it possible for love to be the opposite of hate.⁸⁰ Freud nevertheless believed that hate is older than love. It arises when the ego drives are frustrated by the external world. This hate is thus not an opposite or component of love for another person but is more original and consists in fact of nothing other than a "repudiation of the external world".⁸¹

The question now is where to classify the sadistic component of the drives. Although sadism is not the same as the original hate which stems from the ego drives, it is based upon it. Part of that hate can apparently be linked to the sexual drives where the need satisfaction goes together with an aggressive mastery of the object which is the target of that satisfaction. That is sadism. Thus it can only arise when an object other than oneself is the libidinous target. Curiously enough, this sadism is not designed to inflict pain. Inflicting pain is only a goal in masochism, i.e. where sadism is turned against one's own ego (secondary narcissism). Sadism is also only linked to inflicting pain from a masochistic identification with an object.⁸² Pity, Freud added, is a reaction formation against sadistic urges. As we shall shortly see, because masochism arises from sadism via the sense of guilt we can conclude that compassion, too, can be traced back to a sense of guilt. The sequence can be schematically represented as follows: (narcissism) – sadism – sense of guilt – masochism (via reversal) – sadism (via masochistic identification) – compassion (reaction to sadism).

⁷⁸ S. Freud, *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, SE XIV, pp.138-139.

⁷⁹ Idem, p.138.

⁸⁰ Idem, p.137. Love and hate should be "reserved for the relations of the total ego to objects".

⁸¹ Idem, p.139.

⁸² Idem, pp.128-129.

Hate as sadism is the opposite of love. In addition, there is hate as the continuation of the reaction to frustrations from the external world. It is not easy to differentiate between these two kinds of hate as they often appear admixed. Hate often manifests itself where the relationship with the love object is interrupted, whereby it appears that love is transformed into its opposite, hate-sadism. Yet we are not dealing here with a transformation into the opposite, but with the rise of the original hate stemming from frustration by the external world.⁸³

As we have seen, in obsessional neurosis a sadistic impulse toward a loved one results in a sense of guilt that is then repressed. Freud said as much in the Rat Man case and repeated this idea in *Repression*, which appeared shortly after *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*.⁸⁴ This is also why in *The Unconscious* he made clear that an unconscious sense (consciousness) of guilt can exist, no matter how paradoxical this may appear.⁸⁵ He discussed this unconscious sense of guilt in the context of unconscious feelings. One can only speak of unconscious feelings, Freud claimed, once they have become conscious. The nature of feelings is, after all, that they are noticed, that is, that they are conscious. By “unconscious sense of guilt” he meant also the following: repression severs the corresponding affect from “its idea” (as part of a memory-trace). The fate of that affect can vary: either it remains conscious or it is converted into another affect, or it is stifled. The term “unconscious feeling” refers not to the unconsciousness of a feeling, but to the original link between a specific affect and a specific repressed idea. It was for these reasons that he had been able to say, for example in his letters to Fliess about Hamlet, that “his conscience is his unconscious sense of guilt”: Hamlet’s doubt could be traced back to an original affect that was connected to his dilemma, namely feeling guilty. In *The Unconscious* we thus also find a second reason why Freud increasingly wrote about feeling of guilt: the unconscious sense of guilt is an unconscious affect.

5.7 When eroticism and sense of guilt go hand in hand

Freud’s analysis of feelings of hate and sadism also generated interest in masochism. Incidentally, that sadism remained “puzzling” to him.⁸⁶ When he did mention it, he was generally addressing masochism or the obsessional neurosis which can arise from it. Put more strongly, he never wrote a separate study on the issue nor did he ever analyse any cases of sadism. There seem to be no sadists in Freud’s published works. He did write specific pieces on masochism: “*A Child is Being Beaten*” (1919) and *The Economic Problem of Masochism* (1924). Masochism is

⁸³ Idem, p.139.

⁸⁴ S. Freud, *Repression*, SE XIV, pp.156-157.

⁸⁵ S. Freud, *The Unconscious*, SE XIV, p.177.

⁸⁶ S. Freud, *Introductory Lectures*, p.306.

interesting to us because the sense of guilt plays an important role here. This is natural when we consider that masochism, melancholia and obsessional neurosis are all variants on how sadistic urges are handled.

Freud derived masochism from sadism after *Three Essays* including in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*. Masochism is “sadism employed against one’s own ego”. In this masochism must be clearly differentiated from the self-torture of the obsessional neurotic. Masochism transforms the active sadistic seizure into a passive being tortured. In obsessional neurosis the torture remains active. The obsessional neurotic does not want to be tortured (by another) but tortures himself. The essential difference between sadism and masochism is thus (1) the shift from another person to oneself (shift of object) and (2) a shift from active to passive.⁸⁷ That means that in both sadism and obsessional neurosis the division between ego and others remains much more clear than in masochism. After all, in obsessional neurosis others are excluded from the self-punishment. The obsessional neurotic needs nobody else in order to torture himself. The sadist wants to seize and torture someone else, thus clearly not himself. In masochism, however, another person is very much involved in the self-punishment.

As regards sadism and masochism, Freud relied on Krafft-Ebing’s innovative ideas.⁸⁸ He had introduced and linked the two terms sadism and masochism as active and passive opposites in his *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Among cultured people the sadistic link between cruelty and pleasure is seldom seen and is at the very most latent. When it is encountered it is a deviation in the evolution of psychosexual processes by virtue of psychic degeneration.⁸⁹ This degeneration is a combination of an abnormally large urge to be cruel and a defect of the moral feelings. In this sadism (and its opposite masochism) is a “deviation” from a normal condition: in normal (heterosexual) relationships between a man and woman the man has an active – almost aggressive – role as compared to the more passive woman.⁹⁰ In short, the perversions sadism and masochism are aberrations of an evolutionarily and biologically determined order. Freud not only adopted Krafft-Ebing’s opposition of active sadism versus passive masochism, but early on also the biological foundation of sadistic (and masochistic) components of the drive. Even in *On Narcissism* we find an elaborate argument for the biological origin of the drive.⁹¹ Yet with the introduction of narcissism and of ego-libido versus object-libido, sadism and masochism were in fact detached from any biological origin. A tendency toward cruelty, meaning inflicting pain, is a later development.

Sadism and masochism are opposites and in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* that remains the point of departure, but Freud wrestled with the question as to whether

⁸⁷ S. Freud, *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, pp.127-128.

⁸⁸ S. Freud, *Three Essays*, p.157.

⁸⁹ R. Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, p.67.

⁹⁰ *Idem*, p.69.

⁹¹ S. Freud, *On Narcissism*, p.78.

sadism preceded masochism or vice versa. In addition, the inversion of sadism into masochism is now more a development: the first sadism is not directed at inflicting pain while masochism is, and sadism developed from masochism is as well. These doubts about the “puzzling” sadism are not new in the literature on this subject. Havelock Ellis had previously called Krafft-Ebing’s sadism-masochism opposition into question.⁹² There is no clear border between the two. According to Ellis, even De Sade was more of a masochist than a sadist. In addition, unlike Krafft-Ebing he saw sadism and masochism not so much as pathological deviations. Ellis called them “normal” because he could trace the tendencies back to natural phenomenon. In the animal kingdom sadism is normal and for Ellis it was plausible that during the course of evolution sadism could have partly survived. In particular, the fascination for blood, which is generally latent but is sometimes clearly manifest, appears to be evidence of this. The great difference between natural, normal sadism and abnormal sadism in a civilized society is the inversion of female to male. In the animal world the female is generally the sadist and the male her victim (in the slaughter of drone bees, for example); in civilized society this is reversed.

When Freud took up the topic of masochism, once again it was one of his followers who led the way. In 1913 Sadger had published a long article on sadomasochism including an extensive case history. His thinking was principally shaped by Krafft-Ebing, Ellis and Freud’s *Three Essays*. For Sadger, a sadist was essentially a masochist. A sadist wanted not so much to cruelly torture another as inflict pain because one experiences pleasure from one’s own pain which one is also only permitted to inflict upon another.⁹³ Sadger sought the desire for pain chiefly in physiological causes, although evolutionarily determined causes are also mentioned. What Sadger could not explain was why in some cases masochism and in others sadism arose from these same preconditions.⁹⁴ Despite the idea that the sadist was essentially a masochist, sadism could not simply be derived from masochism. After all, unlike masochism sadism does not originate in sexual urges alone, but also from the cruelty component of the ego drives. For Sadger masochism and sadism were basically perversions which arose in earliest childhood, were not or were only inadequately repressed, and against which hardly any resistance could be built. Although there were for example incestuous desires, these generated neither a sense of guilt nor true compassion.⁹⁵ In comparison to Sadger, in Freud we shall see a clear shift from physiology to a sense of guilt. This shift is naturally

⁹² H. Ellis, *Analysis of the Sexual Impulse. Love and Pain. The Sexual Impulse in Women*, in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Vol. 1, part 2*, pp.104-128. For a short outline on the discussion between Krafft-Ebing and Ellis see P. Vandermeersch, *La chair de la passion. Une histoire de foi: la flagellation*, Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2002, pp.221-230.

⁹³ I. Sadger, “Über den sado-masochistischen Komplex”, in *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen* 5 (1913), pp.157-232 (160).

⁹⁴ Idem, p.177.

⁹⁵ Idem, p.181.

linked with the fact that Sadger saw sadomasochism as a perversion (also in the meaning of immorality) while Freud approached masochism from the obsessional neuroses.

“*A Child is Being Beaten*” appeared as a reflection on the analysis of half a dozen patients (four women⁹⁶ and two men) who had come to Freud with neurotic complaints and each of whom offered him the same fantasy idea: a child is being beaten.⁹⁷ Clinical experience evidently demonstrated that not only were (auto-erotically pleasing) feelings of pleasure linked to this fantasy, but also shame and feelings of guilt.

The fantasy initially pointed simply in the direction of a “sadistic component of the drive” and seemed to be part of a “disposition to obsessional neurosis”, but the analysis of the fantasy turned out to be far more complex.⁹⁸ The question is why this fantasy is libidinous and paired with auto-erotic satisfaction. Freud supplied the answer by differentiating three phases in the development of the fantasy. The earliest phase is about a fantasy in which the father strikes a sibling. In a second phase the storyteller is hit by the father and in the third phase – “a child is being beaten” – an unknown child is struck by a nameless parent (father figure).⁹⁹ In short, what is central is the relationship between the fantasizing person and the father.

In the first phase a girl is fixated upon the father and embroiled in competition with the mother for his love. At least as important is that the love must also be shared with siblings. In this context the fantasy of the father beating another child can emerge. Freud interpreted this as nothing other than the original hate of which we have already spoken, the hate with which the external world is repudiated. The jealousy, powerfully supported by selfish interests, is the basis for a possible conscious fantasy in which the father hits a sibling. The formula is then: “My father does not love that other child; he loves only me.”¹⁰⁰ Freud made clear, as we could not have otherwise expected, that this sibling hate is not sadistic: it is, after all, not sexual but egoistic in nature. An auto-erotic satisfaction thus cannot be traced back to this earliest phase.

Yet this first object choice, the father as love object, makes clear that narcissism and genital organization are already present. The child’s libidinous pursuits are determined by what are later normal sexual goals. The first incestuous infatuations

⁹⁶ Interestingly, this is the only of Freud’s papers in which the female is actually the model for understanding psychic mechanisms. J. Novick, K.K. Novick, “Not for Barbarians. An Appreciation of Freud’s “A Child is Being Beaten””, in E. Spector Person (ed.), *On Freud’s “A Child is Being Beaten”*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1997, pp.31-46 (32). One of the analysed patients is supposed to have been Freud’s own daughter Anna. E. Young-Bruehl, *Anna Freud. A Biography*, Summit Books, New York et al., 1988, pp.103ff.

⁹⁷ S. Freud, “*A Child is Being Beaten*”. *A Contribution to the Study of the Origin of Sexual Perversions*, *SE XVII*, p.179.

⁹⁸ *Idem*, p.182.

⁹⁹ *Idem*, p.185.

¹⁰⁰ *Idem*, p.187.

are either early or late repressions and “at the same time a sense of guilt appears” of unknown origin, yet without a doubt linked with the incestuous desire which remains in the unconscious and repeatedly activates the sense of guilt.¹⁰¹ At the same time, that sense of guilt is also a reaction to the egoistic drive against rivals, but this does not answer the question of the origins of the sense of guilt either. It appears that it arises at the beginning of the following phase (second fantasy) and that it must be attributed to a critical conscience.

The second phase of the fantasy of being beaten by one’s father is a direct expression of this sense of guilt: “a sense of guilt is invariably the factor that transforms sadism into masochism”.¹⁰² Freud now wrote of sadism because in the meantime the original hate had become (partly) sexualized. Masochism therefore not only stems from egoistic repudiation, but also from the first vicissitudes of the sexual drives. Only now can Freud identify the essence of masochism: being beaten is (1) the expression of the punishment for the forbidden, hateful, incestuous desire and (2) the regressive replacement of the incestuous desire.¹⁰³ This final element now also explains the auto-erotic satisfaction: it was indeed originally bound with the later, repressed desire.

The masochistic desire of the second phase of the fantasy is subsequently also repressed. The third phase has a sadistic character that stems from masochism: thus an anonymous child is beaten with pleasure. In other words, that means that although the form of this fantasy is sadistic, the pleasure derived from it remains masochistic in nature. The sense of guilt and the libidinous aspects are now both linked with a new idea.¹⁰⁴

The sense of guilt is thus continued, but Freud repeated that its origin is and remains unknown.¹⁰⁵ What is clear is that it is guided by “the conscience over against the rest of the ego”.¹⁰⁶ It is also clear that the sense of guilt is here related to the Oedipus complex. The sense of guilt is, after all, the most important factor in the repression of the Oedipus complex’s incestuous desires. The sense of guilt and the repression of Oedipal desires are central in the analysis of the masochistic second phase. The first and third phases are often or generally conscious, but the mystery of the libidinous aspect can only be explained via the repressed second

¹⁰¹ Idem, p.188. See also P.J. Mahoney, “A Child is Being Beaten’. A Clinical, Historical, and Textual Study”, in *On Freud’s “A Child is Being Beaten”*, pp.47-66 (60).

¹⁰² S. Freud, “*A Child is Being Beaten*”, p.189.

¹⁰³ “This being beaten is now a convergence of the sense of guilt and sexual love. It is not only the punishment for the forbidden genital relation, but also the regressive substitute for that relation.” Idem. See also A.H. Modell, “Humiliating Fantasies and the Pursuit of Unpleasure”, in *On Freud’s “A Child is Being Beaten”*, pp.67-75 (70).

¹⁰⁴ S. Freud, “*A Child is Being Beaten*”, pp.190-191.

¹⁰⁵ Idem, p.194.

¹⁰⁶ Idem; J.-M. Quinodoz, *Reading Freud*, p.175. Freud speaks of the “structure of the ego” to indicate that conscience is in fact part of the ego. In *The Ego and the Id* this will be made more explicit. We shall treat the analysis of this structure in a subsequent chapter.

phase. This is the core of the issue: the merging of the sense of guilt and erotism demands clarification.

“*A Child is Being Beaten*” is a study of masochism and it confirmed what he had already set out in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*: there is an original, selfish hate which in narcissism is partly paired with a sexual drive. This combination can be called sadism. Although the first phase of the (sadistic) fantasy is characterized by the father striking a sibling, repudiation, not pain is central here: not I, but he/she “there” is struck. Only in the second masochistic fantasy is inflicting pain part of the fantasy. Masochism is not only a self-punishment, but also a substitute for those desires that preserves pleasure. The supplementary element is pain which, as we shall presently see in the Wolf Man case, is designed to pacify the sense of guilt.

The masochism study is an attempt to chart it and to differentiate it from melancholia and obsessional neurosis. The latter was difficult, however: after all, patients arrive with neurotic complaints. Masochism is a construction which can be clinically diagnosed in both melancholia and obsessional neuroses. Theoretically the major difference between masochism and obsessional neuroses is that in masochism the object is replaced by one’s own ego. In obsessional neuroses that object is not given up.¹⁰⁷ Think here of the Rat Man who continued to profoundly love his father and look to him as a model. However the Wolf Man is also clinical proof par excellence that masochism, sadism and obsessional neuroses can be intertwined.

5.8 *The sense of guilt must be set at rest*

The Wolf Man, Sergei Pankejeff, a young, rich Russian aristocrat, went into analysis with Freud in 1910. His analysis ended when the First World War started.¹⁰⁸ It quickly became clear that he was not only a challenge for Freud, but also an exceedingly complex person. He was intelligent, but not easily accessible.¹⁰⁹ His complaints, which had begun in puberty, could be traced back to all kinds of early sexual experiences which left a colourful variety of neurotic symptoms in the young man’s psyche. For this reason alone one could say that this case brings together all of his earlier case histories: just like Dora, a dream plays the principal part; the Wolf Man has a phobia of animals like Little Hans; and like the Rat Man he has all kinds of compulsive thoughts.

¹⁰⁷ S. Freud, *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, p.127.

¹⁰⁸ Sergei Pankejeff offers an account of his analysis in his memoirs. M. Gardiner (ed.), *The Wolf-Man and Sigmund Freud*, Hogarth Press, London, 1972, pp.79-90; 135-152.

¹⁰⁹ In the “Introductory Remarks” to the case Freud focuses on the problem of the analysis of childhood memories when, as in this case, the patient is “unassailable entrenched behind an attitude of obliging apathy”. Freud notes that it took “years” to persuade him to actively participate in his own analysis and to overcome his “negative therapeutic” attitude.

The case history begins initially at the age of three when Sergei is seduced by his sister into performing sexual acts. Sergei saw his sister as a rival, however, “for the love of their parents” and rejected her, but the experience awakened his interest in sexuality.¹¹⁰ He then sought satisfaction with his nanny, Nanya. When he attempted to masturbate in her presence she warned him that children who did that would get a “wound”.¹¹¹ This threat (of castration) did not fail to have its effect: “his sexual life gave way before an external obstacle” and Sergei was “thrown back into an earlier phase of pregenital organization”.¹¹² From that point on the boy’s sexual life was determined by anal-sadistic tendencies. This led to Nanya being chosen as a target for torture. Instead of being a love object she became the object of sadistic urges. The boy also began to torture animals. This sadism was also turned against himself: he had masochistic fantasies of being beaten. This shift from sadistic to masochistic fantasies is crucial in this case. Freud immediately postulated that “a sense of guilt was already concerned in this transformation”.¹¹³ That sense of guilt appears to be a reaction to masturbation, but here, too, for the time being Freud left the exact origin of that sense of guilt aside.

Having arrived at this point, Freud introduced the Wolf Man’s father who is an admired example for the boy. Rejected and threatened by Nanya, he chose a new love object, one which was already a parent in fact, the father. Sergei attempted to seduce his father with temper tantrums to satisfy his masochistic tendencies and simultaneously this means “setting his sense of guilt at rest”.¹¹⁴ The sense of guilt had to be allayed with pain. The relationship, and more specifically the identification, with the boy’s father, was brought by Freud into the discussion of masochism and the sense of guilt. That relationship had now to be explored and Freud did so via the famous dream which gave the Wolf Man his nickname.

The dream is of six or seven white wolves with large tails which stare silently while sitting in a walnut tree. The fear of being eaten by them jerks the four-year-old Sergei awake. Analysis of the dream yielded fragments for reconstruction: “a real occurrence – dating from a very early period – looking – immobility – sexual problems – castration – his father – something terrible”.¹¹⁵ This is clearly an anxiety dream. In complete keeping with *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud regarded this anxiety dream as veiling a wish. We considered this in chapter two: the anxiety dream is an expression of a guilt-laden libidinous desire which is repressed.

It is illuminating for the subsequent discussion that Freud treated the Wolf Man at the same time he was working on *Totem and Taboo*. He was busy constructing

¹¹⁰ S. Freud, *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis, SE XVII*, p.20.

¹¹¹ Idem, p.24.

¹¹² Idem, p.25.

¹¹³ Idem, p.26.

¹¹⁴ Idem, p.28.

¹¹⁵ Idem, p.34.

the primal murder, the actual crime which he considered the basis for the sense of guilt throughout human cultural history and condensed in religion. Here, too, in the case history he tried to construct a similar “real occurrence”, the primal scene: at the age of eighteen months the Wolf Man witnessed his parents engaged in sexual intercourse. As in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud’s disaffirmation of Jung meant a return to the seduction theory with its claim that a real occurrence, and not fantasy, was at the root over a later formed pathology.

This primal scene was determinative for the Wolf Man’s repressed desires. He identified with his mother, wanted to take her position and find his own sexual satisfaction at his father’s hands. This wish has a homosexual character. In *Leonardo da Vinci* and also later in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* Freud made clear that the genesis of homosexuality is a strong identification with the mother, the desire to take her place.¹¹⁶ Given the Wolf Man’s wish – to take his mother’s place which implies castration – it is not surprising to subsequently find a fear of castration and with it fear of the (castrating) father.¹¹⁷ This entire complex was repressed by the Wolf Man: instead of having intercourse with his father a masochistic fantasy of being beaten by him takes shape in order to set at rest the sense of guilt. The Wolf Man’s sense of guilt is here not connected with hate of the father, but exactly the opposite, the desire to have sexual intercourse with him. Thus here we are dealing with what Freud called a negative or inverted Oedipus complex¹¹⁸: the boy wants to take the mother’s place (rival) in order to have sexual intercourse with the father (incestuous desire).

To summarize: since the seduction by his sister and being threatened by Nanya, the Wolf Man developed both sadistic and masochistic fantasies. The masochistic fantasy of being beaten by his father can be traced back to the repressed homosexual wish to have sex with him. The sense of guilt is relevant to the repression (of the wish) and the fear of castration which is a fundamental element of it. The fantasy of being beaten is an attempt to set at rest the sense of guilt and to satisfy a masochistic sexual trend. The homosexual desire is repressed and hidden by the fear of the wolves.

Naturally we cannot conclude that homosexual desires always result in a sense of guilt. On the contrary, for Freud a homosexual object choice was normal in the sense that the transition from narcissism to a heterosexual object choice takes place via a homosexual object. Apparently something else is going on with the Wolf Man. Various externally initiated stimuli and inhibitions (seduction by his sister, being threatened by the nanny) were internalized. The Wolf Man regressed to an earlier stage of sexual development on account of the repeated prohibitions which seriously interfered with his further sexual development. Various pathological conditions may also have existed simultaneously in him: a masochistic tendency,

¹¹⁶ S. Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci*, pp.98-100; S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.108.

¹¹⁷ S. Freud, *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*, p.45-47.

¹¹⁸ Idem, p.119.

phobias, a disposition towards obsessional neurosis as well as the tensions and conflicts between and among them.

The obsessional neurosis the Wolf Man developed after the anxiety dream about the wolves did so in close connection with a certain religious piety. After the first anxiety attack, his mother tried to allay his fears with Biblical stories and religious lessons.¹¹⁹ It was from that moment that he began to develop an obsessional neurosis. Freud's position regarding religion was extremely ambiguous and also problematic here. He understood that religion might allow the Wolf Man to sublimate some of his fantasies.¹²⁰ In the relationship between Christ and God (son and father) both homosexual and masochistic tendencies are expressed and to a certain degree distanced from, and in this way repressed desires could be somewhat drained. "But he was unsuccessful" and the "faith of piety" was soon victorious over his "rebelliousness of critical research".¹²¹ The religion with which the Wolf Man came into contact signified not only the possibility for sublimation. When he began to understand the doctrinal connection between various stories, religion became a system of prohibitions and commands which weighed him down. The Wolf Man became a victim of what Freud had earlier articulated in his critique of morality and religion: the sense of guilt once again gained the upper hand. The result was that those desires and fantasies which had already been repressed were again powerfully repressed and thus remained the source of the emotional problems. Thus the Wolf Man only had limited benefit from a religion which could articulate and illustrate the ambivalent feelings towards his father. Simultaneously the doctrine of God was forced upon him. Belief in a prohibiting and authoritative God sharpened his conscience and that led to all kinds of compulsive acts and thoughts. The masochistic sense of guilt from which it appeared he had freed himself returned as a compulsively neurotic sense of guilt. Given the fact that religion is regarded analogous to obsessional neurosis, i.e. pathology, in retrospect

¹¹⁹ Idem, p.61.

¹²⁰ Idem, pp.64-65, p.115. As we have seen, Freud had already stated in a letter to Pfister that he regarded religious sublimation positively. S. Freud, O. Pfister, *Psychoanalysis and Faith*, p.16. The problem, however, was the fact that religion (Judaism, Christianity) demands repression and thus strengthens neuroses. This ambivalence about religion and sublimation is repeated here in the Wolf Man case.

¹²¹ S. Freud, *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*, p.65, p.70. Freud suggests here that sublimation is a free, critical intellectual activity. However, given the nature of sublimation (as "normal" mechanism in the service of taming the sexual drives in a society that demands this), the nature of religion (as analogous to obsessional neurosis) and the complex of pathologies the Wolf Man suffers, it is hard to see how sublimation in this case could ever be successful. In his 1927 *Dostoevski and Parricide* this possibility/impossibility of sublimation is also elaborated upon: Dostoevski "hoped to find a way out and a liberation from guilt in the Christ ideal", yet failed in this because his sense of guilt was extraordinary intense and supported by a "religious feeling" that builded on sense of guilt. S. Freud, *Dostoevsky and Parricide*, SE XXI, p.187. On this (im)possibility of religious sublimation in Freudian thought see A. Vergote, *De sublimatie. Een uitweg uit Freuds impasses*, Uitgeverij Boom, Amsterdam, 2002, pp.202-224. Compare also S. Heine, *Grundlagen der Religionspsychologie. Modelle und Methoden*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2005, pp.172-173.

it is hard to see how the Wolf Man's piety could ever be qualified as sublimation. Indeed the depiction of sublimation remains (again) vague here.

Although the Wolf Man case offered once again an analysis of the origin of the sense of guilt, Freud did not make a clear pronouncement regarding that origin. Rather, he added the fear of castration as a possible origin¹²², but for the time being a clear structuring was absent. He eventually concluded that the sense of guilt arose from other than just sexuality, including masturbation, homosexual-incestuous desires and fear of castration.¹²³ By "other than" he meant the selfish drives and the original hate (the rejection) and the later sadism which were directed at his sister, the nanny and all the animals he tortured. All these elements played a role in any case in the Wolf Man's sense of sin with his pious obsessional neurosis. Once again, here the interaction of selfish and sexual drives must be clarified, something he also noted in "*A Child is Being Beaten*". But that is not all. There is also the primal scene as the source of the sense of guilt which is analogous with *Totem and Taboo*. After all, it is that scene which called forth the Wolf Man's castration anxiety which enabled the later sense of guilt. Freud even went a step further: the interpretation of the primal scene by the Wolf Man presumed that there are "inherited schemata", "like categories of philosophy", which can "place" impressions.¹²⁴ Only in that way could that primal scene have made such an impression and the father (not the mother) be identified as castrator. An outstanding example of such a scheme is the Oedipus complex, a model for the relationship of a child to its parents which, after all, is considered a cultural constant, which since the primal murder has been expressed in our culture in varied times and places. Indeed, he also referred here to a possible inherited sense of guilt that presumes a certain instinctive power to judge critically. One must immediately add that this presumption of inherited instinct does not mean that the sense of guilt is innate. The schemes or categories are only active as reactions to life experiences.¹²⁵ In the concrete case of the Wolf Man, this means that the primal scene precedes the working through of inherited material.

¹²² "His identification of his father with the castrator became important as being the source of an intense unconscious hostility towards him and a sense of guilt which reacted against it." Idem, p.87.

¹²³ Idem, p.108.

¹²⁴ Idem, p.119. The reference to categories of philosophy is not only a direct reference to Kant, but certainly also to *Totem and Taboo* (as an analysis of the categorical imperative) and an unsolved problem addressed in that study: the issue of group psychology and the continuity in the psychic life of man. There he suggested that this psychic continuity meant that there was an inheritance of psychic dispositions "which needs to be given some sort of impetus in the life of the individual before they can be roused into actual operation". A "deed" is required. S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.158.

¹²⁵ S. Freud, *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*, p.97. Here Freud fully agrees "with Jung in recognizing the existence of this phylogenetic heritage". He adds: "I regard it as a methodological error to seize on a phylogenetic explanation before the ontogenetic possibilities have been exhausted". Phylogenetic experiences only catch hold where an ontogenetic interpretation of experiences fails. Despite the agreement with Jung, Freud thus emphasized the real occurrence and the "existence" of schemata that might be influential, thus opposing Jung's view on the symbolic meaning of the Oedipus complex. Compare S. Freud, *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*, p.64.

Although Freud collected the material in this case that he used to link the sense of guilt more clearly than ever with the Oedipus complex in *The Ego and the Id* and in particular also with the identification of the father and the formation of a conscience, there still remains the working through of phylogenetic material. That must then also explain why the Wolf Man's father could be both the love object and the castrator, i.e. the one who prohibited his Oedipal desires. In *The Ego and the Id* this issue returned, and it appears that this inheritance is extremely problematic. As for the origin of the sense of guilt, there are now a number of candidates: inherited schemata which can be activated, egoistic drives, sadistic components of the drives, identification with one's father, fear of castration, and conscience.

5.9 "Becoming is impossible without destruction"

The five years between "A Child is Being Beaten" and *The Economic Problem of Masochism* made a world of difference. This difference was largely determined by *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and *The Ego and the Id* (1923). Before we continue with the analysis of masochism at the end of the next chapter, we shall spend some time now on what could be termed a transitional text, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. This is an extraordinary piece, short but complex, the result of a number of trains of thought which can be traced back to Freud's earliest work.¹²⁶ I shall limit myself here to what is essential for the purposes at hand.

This study is first and foremost a result of the war: it is, after all, a consideration of the analysis of war traumas and neuroses. A year earlier Freud had briefly dealt with the topic and observed that the core of war neuroses was conflict, not in the form of a repression of sexual drive as in "normal" neuroses, but between "the soldier's old peaceful ego and his new warlike one".¹²⁷ What is mysterious is the fixation on the trauma.¹²⁸ This cannot be the work of the pleasure principle which always seeks the avoidance of unpleasure. It now appeared that the war experience which was the basis of the trauma was not accompanied by fear. Freud came up with the idea that the repetition of the trauma was an attempt to evoke the fear reaction in order to be able to protect oneself against the trauma. This theory appears to conflict with the earlier theory of the dream as a wish fulfilment. Freud now believed that the compulsion to repeat which led to the trauma every time must be sought "beyond" the pleasure principle, which he "proved" with his analysis of a small child's play¹²⁹ in which a bobbin was repeatedly thrown away and then picked up again. In this "fort-da" play the child staged the painful disappearance

¹²⁶ Notably *Project for a Scientific Psychology*.

¹²⁷ S. Freud, *Introduction to Psychoanalysis and the War Neuroses*, SE XVII, p.209.

¹²⁸ S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p.13.

¹²⁹ This little child was in reality his own grandson. P. Gay, *Freud*, p.399.

and return of the mother. It was this repeated staged painful disappearance that incited Freud to find its cause beyond the pleasure principle.¹³⁰

The compulsion to repeat was now made independent and a general phenomenon.¹³¹ After all, clinical experience not only revealed resistance (according to the pleasure principle) against releasing the repressed, but also the repeated insistence of the repressed. For us this is an important idea because in *The Economic Problem of Masochism* he put forward that the unconscious sense of guilt is powerful in the “negative therapeutic reaction” and in the resistance against healing.¹³² This unconscious sense of guilt becomes *the* expression of the compulsion to repeat and ultimately of the death instinct.

In addition, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* corrects the narcissism theory. Freud was reacting to his followers’ concerns that the introduction of narcissism and the two forms of libido (ego-libido and object-libido) could imply that a difference between various drives is no longer possible. That would place him precariously close to Jung’s optimistic monism and the theory of the primal libido. By contrast, his theories were always dualistic, as he himself stated. After all, the fundament of his psychoanalysis was that man is a being in conflict. He felt compelled to restore the dualism.¹³³ Narcissism is not only the introduction of two forms of libido, but is principally a battleground between underlying constructive and destructive forces.

The compulsion to repeat indicates that there is a drive based on restoration of an old condition (regression), a return even to an original, inorganic condition.¹³⁴ This thought led him to the position that the goal of life is death, for death precedes life.¹³⁵ This idea meant that within a single individual from the very beginning there could be a “conservative” drive which did not change – which in fact boiled down to a resistance against the construction of one’s own ego in narcissism – and which strove to return to an original state. This train of thought is, he wrote with emphasis, a speculation¹³⁶ and it is thus also not strange that this discussion included other thinkers on life and death; he was thus searching for a tradition to contribute to and be part of.

¹³⁰ S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, pp.14-17. For an interpretation of Freud’s analysis of the child’s play see G. Kimmeler, *Verneinung und Wiederkehr. Eine methodische Lektüre von Freuds “Jenseits des Lustprinzips”*, Edition Discord, Tübingen, 1988, pp.28-67; A. Vergote, *De sublimitate*, pp.124-131.

¹³¹ S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p.17.

¹³² S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, SE XIX, p.50; S. Freud, *The Economic Problem of Masochism*, SE XIX, p.166; Freud, *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, SE XXIII, pp.242-243. See also J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, pp.388-390.

¹³³ S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, pp.52-53. See also J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, p.373; P. Gay, *Freud*, p.397.

¹³⁴ S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, pp.36f. See also: J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, p.372.

¹³⁵ S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p.38.

¹³⁶ Idem, p.24.

Freud primarily sought a connection to biology via August Weismann's work.¹³⁷ He turned to Weismann in order to gain insight into the link between reproduction (frequency, duration, etc.) and mortality from a simple observation that wherever animals quickly reproduce life expectancy is short. In a number of studies he developed a theory in which he differentiated in every living being a mortal half, the body, and an immortal half of germ-cells which is prepared to develop into a new individual with a new body.¹³⁸ Freud saw an analogy here with his own dualism: there are drives directed at development, growth and reproduction and there are drives which are conservatively directed at preservation and repetition. Yet Freud also understood that his speculation could not be proven with biology and he had to recognize that this theorizing about the drives had driven him "into the harbour of Schopenhauer's philosophy".¹³⁹ He cited Schopenhauer as a philosopher who recognized in the sexual drives a "will to live" (*Bejahung*) on the one hand, and on the other hand saw death (*Quietiv des Willens*) as the goal of life (*Verneinung*).

I believe this appeal to the authority of biology and philosophy was not an unqualified success. Weismann's theory was extremely speculative and, as Freud also showed, subject to criticism.¹⁴⁰ The appeal to Schopenhauer was also problematic because for him the *Bejahung* was a natural necessity while the *Verneinung* was a "voluntary resignation", an "ascesis". Thus Schopenhauer's *Verneinung* was something other than Freud's unconscious, lasting compulsion to repeat, or death instinct. In addition, while in Schopenhauer the *Bejahung* was principally selfish and lasting, for Freud the sexual drive was also the possibility

¹³⁷ Idem, pp.45-50. After a certain movement away from physiology biology in the texts on meta-psychoanalysis, the elaborations on Weismann in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* show a return to earlier writings (like the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*) in which the references to physiology/biology were much more abundant. Although at first sight this return to biology might seem surprising, we should bear in mind that the Freudian concept of the unconscious with its mechanism was regarded by Freud as situated between body and consciousness – in a letter from 1917 to Georg Groddeck he called it, for example, the "missing link" between these two. S. Freud, G. Groddeck, *Briefwechsel*, p.22. From this general point of view, "speculations" beyond the pleasure principle (as key mechanism in the unconscious) were bound to touch upon the body and biological theories thereupon. A striking fact concerning the reference to biology in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is that it serves as the basis for a destructive drive. When we consider Freud's previous Darwinistic approaches, such a call upon biology is surprising: in Darwinistic evolutionary thought a death drive makes no sense. T. Geyskens, Ph. van Haute, *Van doodsdrijf tot hechtingstheorie. Het primaat van het kind bij Freud, Klein en Hermann*, Uitgeverij Boom, Amsterdam, 2003, pp.40-41.

¹³⁸ A. Weisman, *Über Leben und Tod. Eine biologische Untersuchung*, Fischer, Jena, 1884; A. Weismann, *Die Continuität des Keimplasma's als Grundlage einer Theorie der Vererbung*, Fischer, Jena, 1885. Notably in the latter text, not referred to by Freud, Weismann elaborates on the continuity of germ-plasm, on immortality and the inheritance of a "core substance of a specific molecular structure" that is unchangeable and that carries the characteristics of the species or family group.

¹³⁹ S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p.50.

¹⁴⁰ Idem, pp.47-48.

for object love. His appeal to Schopenhauer was valid only in so far as both were dualistic and differentiated sexual drives from other drives.¹⁴¹

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud introduced the death instinct (Thanatos) to describe the continuity and original state of ego drives in addition to the sexual drives which he also now called life instinct (Eros).¹⁴² In narcissism ego drives are libidinous and a consequent polarity arises in the resulting object love: love and hate. As we have seen, that hate was originally a rejection of the external world by the ego drives. It is that hate which he now wanted to explain via the death drive. Only with object love can one speak of a “sadistic component of the sexual drives”, which can consequently turn into masochism. Now that he introduced the death instinct, sadism and masochism were once again subjects of discussion and he presumed now that masochism preceded sadism. After all, it was no longer inconceivable that there was another principle beyond the pleasure principle that was not directed at the avoidance of unpleasure but at experiencing pain.¹⁴³ The repeated return to the traumatic is an expression of this.

In addition to searching for authorities that, all things considered, hardly supported Freud’s speculations, the way for the introduction of the death drive had already been cleared to a certain degree. He referred to a 1912 essay by the psychoanalyst Sabina Spielrein entitled *Destruction as the Cause of Becoming*.¹⁴⁴ She read this at a meeting at Freud’s home.¹⁴⁵

This essay by Spielrein is remarkable because her point of departure was one of Freud’s old questions: how can it be that the sexual drive leads not only to positive feelings, but also to negative ones, such as anxiety and disgust? We could add sense of guilt to this as well. Spielrein noted, as had Freud earlier, that an externally imposed sexual morality failed to explain the damming up of the sexual drive. Resistance and repression had always been the answer. Spielrein, who cited Jung extensively here, arrived at the following ideas from her clinical experience. Anxiety is the most important of the repressing powers, not anxiety of a dominating morality, but anxiety which stems from the own “love glow” which powerfully forces one to accept what one does not want; one feels the end, the ephemeral, the awareness of mortality and the limitations of love relations.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ A. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, Band 1*, §53-§71. In a 1919 letter Freud wrote that he was reading Schopenhauer for the first time, but not with much pleasure. S. Freud, L. Andreas-Salomé, *Briefwechsel*, p.109.

¹⁴² S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, notably pp.50ff. In the foreword to the fourth edition (1920) of *Three Essays*, Freud stated that his “enlarged” definition of sexuality corresponded to the platonic term “Eros”. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and especially also in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) the reference to Plato’s concept of Eros are made explicit. On this issue see, P.-L. Assoun, *Freud, la philosophie et les philosophes*, pp.139-150.

¹⁴³ S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, pp.54-55.

¹⁴⁴ S. Spielrein, *Die Destruktion als Ursache des Werdens*, in *Sämtliche Schriften*, Traute Hesch, Freiburg, 1987, pp.98-143.

¹⁴⁵ P. Gay, *Freud*, p.396.

¹⁴⁶ S. Spielrein, *Die Destruktion als Ursache des Werdens*, p.99.

A counter-reaction to rejection is part of the “love glow”. Spielrein consequently suggested that the ego and sexual drives were not only directed at the avoidance of unpleasure and the generation of pleasure. As an example she took a certain “joy at the recognition of an acquaintance” which seemed to ensure the fostering of a strict, parental morality in adulthood that was sometimes even stricter than before.¹⁴⁷ Evidently there is a certain compulsion to repeat which is directed back toward the original state even if that meant a painful self-curtailment. There is evidently something like a destruction-instinct.

Citing Nietzsche, Spielrein thought that the most beloved could also become the source of death. Her reasoning is simply this: in object love an ego is directed toward assimilation with the loved object. That means a discontinuation of the ego in favour of a “we”. The ego drives are directed toward self-preservation, but the sexual drives, aside from the preservation of the species, have as their goal the discontinuation of the ego. As Nietzsche put it, “the will to love is the will to one’s own death”.¹⁴⁸ “After all, without destruction no ‘becoming’ is possible.” Nietzsche was not the only one extensively cited. Spielrein found the most beautiful examples of assimilating love in Wagner in, *inter alia*, Brünhilde’s death scene in *Götterdämmerung* and naturally also Isolde’s love-death in *Tristan und Isolde*. Yet in Christ who offered himself as sacrifice Spielrein also saw an urge to destruction within an urge to become. In other words, the sexual drives consist of two opposing components, one directed at reproduction, assimilation, “becoming”, and the other at self-destruction. In fact, with an eye to the destructive component of the sexual drive, Spielrein worked out what Freud in *Three Essays* called the cruelty component of the sexual drive. He considered the component sadistic, but Spielrein saw it rather as masochistic. In other words, Spielrein’s “death drive” was not the same as Freud’s. After all, Freud’s had to be strictly differentiated from the life-instinct. Thus we find here ideas upon which he could elaborate: death drive, compulsion to repeat and primary masochism.¹⁴⁹

We must ask ourselves why Freud introduced a speculative principle like the death drive (apart from already mentioned reasons) for which there was hardly substantial clinical evidence – in his patients he always found an admixture of the drives related to objects. We have already seen that he had been in search of the origin of unpleasure since the seduction theory. In principle, he opined, a person strives to avoid unpleasure and procure pleasure. Yet clinical experience showed that there was a lot of unpleasure that did not drain off just like that, but rather appeared to increase. This unpleasure cannot be explained either by the

¹⁴⁷ Idem, p.110.

¹⁴⁸ Idem, p.118.

¹⁴⁹ It should be noticed that Spielrein’s definition of sexuality is quite different from Freud’s. Spielrein writes on sexuality as a search for assimilation, whereas Freud defines sexuality in terms of pleasure and satisfaction (also of the body). On this see A. Kerr, *A Most Dangerous Method: The Story of Freud, Jung and Sabina Spielrein*, Sinclair-Stevenson, London, 1994, pp.319ff.

pleasure or the reality principles. After all, the reality principle meant nothing other than a continuation of the pleasure principle where unpleasure can gradually be drained away so that new unpleasure can be avoided. He had described that in *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning*, as we have seen. We also know that Freud could not embrace the idea that an imposed morality could be held responsible for the damming up of unpleasure's outflow. It must rather be assumed that moral power derives from the pleasure principle. (Freud would work this out in *The Ego and the Id*.) The imposed morality is thus not the source of unpleasure. There must then be a source of unpleasure beyond the pleasure and reality principles, a primal unpleasure which in fact set the pleasure principle in motion. The repetition compulsion pointed in this direction. The speculative concept of the death instinct was now seen as the source of the primal unpleasure: there was a conservative drive which was directed at a condition which must be branded unpleasurable. Freud was not able to imagine anything more concrete. In fact, the death drive seems to be a dogma indicating that man is by nature inclined to "evil" – a secular theory on sin. Hence, what does appear clear is that this conservative death instinct had a moral connotation: history reveals not so much the development toward a steadily higher level of civilization (Jung), but indeed the repeated threat of retreat into barbarism. The death instinct thus also pointed in the direction of the amorality of the child and the most primitive man. The compulsion to repeat in the direction of an original state is then also a return to an amoral position in which love and hate are not tamed, but rather are experienced as unlimited. In this condition primitive man is not only like a wolf, but because the small child sees the first objects as part of himself, also a wolf to himself. The link with morality is not so strange if one considers that Freud had derived his ideas on the pleasure and reality principles from primary and secondary processes, processes which he initially formulated as the terrain of the drives against which a moral character is built (compare Meynert's theory of primary and secondary ego). In this sense, the theory on the death drive was more an expression of a "moral" conviction than the result of clinical experience. It is thus not surprising that after *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* he could utilize the death instinct only when this was admixed with the sexual drives (*The Ego and the Id*; *The Economic Problem of Masochism*) with a single exception: *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). That book deals with culture and morality as a battle against the destructive drives.

Corrections to the theory of narcissism resulted in Freud more closely examining the cruelty components of the sexual drive. We have already seen this: the basis for sadism lies in the original hate of the ego drives as well as in the hate which stems from rejection and thereby serves self-preservation. The death instinct is the result of a careful thinking through of hate and that self-preservation. In sadism the death drive is applied to objects, but with the death drive theory nothing more stands in the way of deriving sadism from masochism. The death drive is, after all, opposed to the construction of one's own ego. It is directed at the dissolution of the ego.

Masochism can thus be primary: when ego-drives are libidinous generally the first love object is also the first object of the destructive drive, the ego.

If we now examine the narcissism theory and the corrections made to it, if we also take the speculations for what they are and turn our attention to clinical experience, then we see that Freud introduced narcissism in order to denote a developmental stage in which the construction of the ego/egoism is completed. All speculations refer in the direction of destructive powers, but ultimately the only clinical evidence for this is the existence of a negative therapeutic reaction. There is something like an unconscious sense of guilt. Narcissism as a developmental stage is thus certainly not just a moment of infatuation with oneself. It is a battlefield for the ego: construction or destruction, positive feelings or a dominating (unconscious) feeling of guilt.

Freud's ideas examined in this and the next chapter demonstrate the following tendencies (in summary). In order to experience one's own ego narcissism is fundamental and this process entails a certain splitting between the ego and a norm (ego ideal) against which one measures oneself. The ego ideal thus also gives rise to a critical authority which measures the ego: the conscience. Freud consequently more clearly emphasized identification, the internalization of another. This internalization took various forms. Parental authority, and in particular the father, can be internalized and strengthen the critical conscience. But someone else can also be internalized as the criticizing ego, such as in depression. Narcissistic identification with an image of oneself creates the possibility for identification with others. The other way around, narcissism is the necessary presumed stage that precedes every object choice. Thanks to narcissism it is also possible to love another and thereby also hate others as nuisances. As we know, relations with others are mostly ambivalent.

These roughly sketched outlines yield all kinds of tension and conflict – conflict between various drives, between love and hate – whereby emotions are repeatedly attached to people. The specific vicissitudes of these tensions and conflicts ultimately determine the identity (or specific pathology) of a person. We have already seen how obsessional neuroses, depression and masochism are related in their effect on hostile drives and feelings of hate. We have also seen that Freud repeatedly presented the sense of guilt as the core moment in order to interpret various pathologies. We can now formulate that in a more general sense: man is a being in conflict and the sense of guilt is the expression of this par excellence. Both in the narcissistic relationship with himself and in the associated workings of a critical authority as in the tension-filled relationships with others – the primal model is the Oedipus complex – sense of guilt is a decisive factor for identity. The specific damming of the drives and all the identifications are inextricably linked with that feeling.

As a general conclusion this cannot be merely explained as Freud's answer to Jung's optimistic monism. It also cannot be merely explained from a biographical

argument – for example by reference to *The Interpretation of Dreams* – as if sense of guilt were just a personal preoccupation. That the sense of guilt stands central in the specific identity of individuals must be explained against the background of Freud's general point of departure that man is a being in conflict, both internally as well as in relation to others and external reality. This was confirmed by all his patients from his earliest clinical work. He thus also defined the sense of guilt in *The Ego and the Id* as the expression of tension and conflict both internally as well as in relation to external reality.

Chapter 6

Analyses of the ego

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we saw how Freud attempted to grasp the concept of the ego and the forces which affect and form it. That effort resulted in studies which he called “analysis of the ego”.¹ These sought to chart narcissism, the conscience, the drives, love and hate, sadism and masochism, Eros and Thanatos. The ego is a construct in which narcissism is fundamental, but within which destructive forces are also active from the start. Via the analysis of the sense of guilt in “*A Child is Being Beaten*” and in the Wolf Man case he was able to clinically approach these destructive forces. Speculation regarding the death instinct in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* reached beyond the analytic possibilities.

Two studies epitomize this period’s theoretical work as well as the powerful central position of the issue of the sense of guilt: *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* and *The Ego and the Id*. This chapter focuses on these studies and in both the sense of guilt is prominent. Finally, in this chapter we will return to masochism and the working through of the texts indicated above in *The Economic Problem of Masochism*. In order to understand the core structures of Freud’s work in these studies we must first examine the influence of Nietzsche’s thought on Freud.

It is clear that Freud relates *Group Psychology* to narcissism. A clear differentiation between the psychology of the individual and group psychology cannot be defended because others appear regularly as example, object, helper or opponent within the ego analysis.² An individual cannot be isolated from the social environment. The question for Freud was whether that meant that there was a social drive or a social instinct. The answer to that question is of importance for our analysis of the sense of guilt. If there is a social instinct then the origins of the sense of guilt lie within it. Freud’s answer was that group relations do not spring from a social instinct, but rather from the group’s primal model, the family and identification with one’s parents and siblings.

The Ego and the Id dovetails perfectly with *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Freud testified to this himself in his introduction. It is thus also a clear continuation of ego analysis, but also with a far-reaching elaboration of the notion that an individual must always be comprehended in relation to others. Put another way, the ego is largely built upon identifications with others. These identifications are a further extension of the first narcissistic identification with one’s own image. The reason

¹ S. Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*.

² For example, idem, p.69.

for making the analysis of identification central to this chapter is simple and clear: dealing with the issue of identification puts a direct spotlight on the sense of guilt.

The subject of the sense of guilt dominated Freud's work in the early 1920s. This might lead us to believe that Freud's interest in the sense of guilt was only serious from this point onward. This study has already demonstrated the opposite, and this is underlined by a general tendency in Freud's systematic publications, starting with *On Narcissism* and continuing until *The Ego and the Id*. In these studies in particular Freud repeatedly reached back to his oldest psychoanalytic material.

6.2 "The Sphinx of ancient legend"

Freud's interest in group psychology stemmed from the observation that an individual can behave very differently as part of a group than one would normally expect. A group can decisively influence the individual.³ In order to gain insight into this reciprocity, in *Group Psychology*⁴ he sought a link with a renowned book by the physician Gustav le Bon entitled *La Psychologie des Foules*.⁵

The masses can be compared to a sphinx, Le Bon wrote: a monster that must be defied.⁶ This is an image he used when he looked back upon a hundred years of French history: the French Revolution, the 1848 Revolution and above all the Paris Commune of 1871. According to Le Bon, history demonstrated that we live in the "age of the masses". He was not particularly happy about this: perhaps the rise of the masses constitutes one of the final stages of western civilization, the reversion to a time of confused anarchy.⁷ Le Bon was a passionate anti-democrat who repeatedly pleaded for an aristocratic form of government, for political and religious leaders who could control the masses with psychological insights and thus safeguard civilization. The people, the herd, need a herdsman.⁸ That was his message.

³ Idem, p.70.

⁴ On this text see E. Spector Person (ed.), *On Freud's "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego"*, The Analytic Press, Hillsdale, London, 2001; J.-M. Quinodoz, *Reading Freud*, pp.194-202.

⁵ Idem, pp.72-81. Freud read this book in a German translation, *Psychologie der Massenseele*. On Le Bon in comparison to Freud see F. Ankersmit, "De moord op de oervader. Freud en het onbehagen in de cultuur", in R. Aerts, K. van Berkel (eds.), *De pijn van Prometheus. Essays over cultuurkritiek en cultuurpessimisme*, Historische Uitgeverij, Groningen, 1996, pp.140-174.

⁶ G. le Bon, *Psychologie der Massenseele*, Kröner Verlag, Leipzig, 1932, p.83.

⁷ Idem, p.5.

⁸ On this see D. Anzieu, "Freud's Group Psychology: Background, Significance, and Influence", in E. Spector Person (ed.), *On Freud's "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego"*, p.39-60 (46).

Although Freud avoided Le Bon's political preoccupations, naturally they did affect his view of the masses.⁹ According to Le Bon, the masses' qualities are comparable with the most primitive developmental stages, those seen among primitive peoples and children. In other words, a crowd is characterized by instinctiveness, fractiousness, an inaptitude for logical thought, a lack of judgment and critical spirit, and an abundance of emotion.¹⁰ Le Bon emphasized the instinctive and illogical character of the crowd: a crowd is naïve and thus also changeable. It can wield incredible power in both the positive (military heroism) and the destructive sense. Thus a crowd is prepared to do that which an individual would never dare. Primitive man's instincts surface and a crowd is thus more powerful than egoistic drives. An irrational crowd can, after all, convince an individual to forgo self-preservation.¹¹

What interested Freud was Le Bon's approach to the question of the origin of the transformation of an individual into a member of the crowd. Also, for Freud a crowd was, as it were, a single entity, a collective homogeneity. For Le Bon the characteristics of an individual when in a crowd were the disappearance of conscious personality (rationality, critical spirit, etc.), dominion over the unconscious (primal instinct), guidance of ideas and feelings through suggestion and transference, and the tendency towards immediate fulfilment of ideas. Freud largely adopted these ideas thus emphasizing the inhibition of intellectual activity and the increase of affectivity within a crowd.¹²

With the exception of the ideas which he adopted, the road from Le Bon to Freud is otherwise a dead end.¹³ Le Bon only saw crowds as revolutionary hordes which briefly surged and then quickly disintegrated. In light of *Totem and Taboo*, it is clear that Freud was more interested in another kind of horde: the group mind as the bearer of the morality which forms individuals, as the creator of language and folklore, in short, the crowd as a society.¹⁴

⁹ When Freud engaged in the study of group psychology he could hardly have avoided an authority in the field such as Le Bon. Nevertheless the reference is remarkable for two reasons. First, Freud called upon a scholar defending authoritarian leadership just after the fall of the Habsburg monarchy. Second, Le Bon's view of the masses is comparably negative as was Freud's view on the common folk in the 1880s and 1890s. Yet his assessment changed, and notably in *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* it was not mass behaviour but the primitive mechanisms that underlie civilization that were the focus of his attention.

¹⁰ G. le Bon, *Psychologie der Massenseele*, p.21.

¹¹ Idem, p.22, p.41.

¹² S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.82.

¹³ According to Freud, Le Bon had brilliantly depicted the group mind but failed to provide a thorough analysis of the mechanisms involved in group psychology. Le Bon had reduced the complexity of group psychology to "the mutual suggestion of individuals and the prestige of the leaders". Idem, p.88, p.129.

¹⁴ Idem, p.83.

6.3 “A psychological crowd”

Although Freud was interested in organized social forms and much less in Le Bon’s unorganized groups, he held onto the image of the crowd as described by Le Bon. Calling upon William McDougall’s *The Group Mind*, Freud now explored the crowd further.¹⁵ McDougall differentiated between an organized and an unorganized group where, incidentally, the transition between the two is fluid. Not every group of people also constitutes a “psychological crowd”; not every group has the same goal, with a more or less homogeneous feeling. A psychological crowd presumes a certain degree of “mental homogeneity”. According to McDougall, the most important characteristic of such a psychological crowd is the “intensification of emotions” which has a powerful attraction for individuals.¹⁶ There is a “primitive response of sympathy”. That sympathy is an innate instinct. McDougall illustrated this by the phenomenon of panic. Crowd panic makes clear how hot emotions can run when individuals adopt another’s fear. He looked for an explanation for this in a speculative theory of the “collective consciousness” which principally stems from Hegel’s philosophy: individual consciousness is a fragmentary manifestation of the “all-inclusive world-consciousness”.¹⁷

Freud ignored these speculations. When McDougall moved beyond these and progressed to the inhibition of the intellect in the crowd, Freud picked the text up again. This intellectual inhibition, in combination with the impulse to act emotionally, is strong in unorganized groups. Although the characteristics of this unorganized crowd can be found in all groups, a crowd can indeed function at a higher level. After all, civilized groups are also familiar with the containment of instincts and intellectual provocation. Freud criticized McDougall on this point. According to Freud, it is better to propose that the individual is intellectually curtailed when in a crowd. McDougall believed that organizational development was essentially an evolutionary process whereby an individual only reaches a higher level via the group.¹⁸ Freud wanted none of this; a crowd restrains an individual unless the roles are reversed and the character of the individual determines the character of the organization.

What remains is that an individual changes in and because of a group. What concerned Freud here was the question of the psychological explanation for the change. He first looked for an explanation in suggestion, or put differently

¹⁵ Idem, pp.83ff.

¹⁶ W. McDougall, *The Group Mind. A Sketch of the Principles of Collective Psychology with some Attempts to apply them to the Interpretation of National Life and Character*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1920, p.24.

¹⁷ Idem, p.38.

¹⁸ McDougall’s starting point is Darwin’s evolutionism and the idea that “the growth of the individual mind” is determined by the “mental forces of the society in which it grows up”. Idem, pp.5-6. That eventually leads to the continuing growth of knowledge and improvement in morality. Idem, pp.208ff.

“imitation” or “contagion”.¹⁹ The question is thus: what is the essence of suggestion? Yet Freud did not want to answer this question directly, or better said, he chose to search for the explanation for group psychology via the concept of libido.²⁰ That in itself is not so strange, for this term fits Freud’s theoretical work from the preceding years better. Suggestion picked up a very old issue, for here in fact we can see the return of the problem of hypnosis. The article *Psychical (or Mental) Treatment* reflected his thoughts of the time on this matter. We saw in chapter three that Freud named obedience and faithfulness as the characteristics of a hypnotized person. Freud then already indicated that this faithful obedience belonged to the “characteristics of love”.²¹ Given this train of thought, it is understandable that Freud switched from suggestion to libido.

As previously stated, Freud was interested in organized groups. He chose two of the most highly organized groups to study: the Church and the army.²² They are both examples of an artificial crowd: the group’s coherence is not natural, but requires pressure from the outside (leadership) in order to protect the group against disintegration and change. He believed that this research into highly organized groups would be enlightening because it was in these relationships that he hoped to find that which was hidden elsewhere. This idea is curious, for until that time Freud constantly sought more primitive phenomena in order to clarify psychological subjects: the Oedipus myth, the child, the savage. These were for him phenomena in which he recognized basic psychic structures which were concealed by later developments. Freud’s study of the Church and the army claimed the opposite.

The choice of the Church and the army is striking for another reason. Or rather, the choice of the Church is striking. Naturally the First World War was still fresh in everyone’s memory in 1921 and thus the choice of the army is obvious. Others had also published on that theme. McDougall was Freud’s most important source and in a chapter entitled “The highly organized group” he described complex organizations based on the example of the army. Wilfred Trotter, to whom Freud later referred in *Group Psychology*, also wrote about the war and the behaviour of leaders and groups during it.²³ However, neither McDougall nor Trotter examined religious organizations. Only Le Bon addressed religion, and then only in the context of a chapter on leadership. Thus Freud’s interest in the Church must be sought internally, and I believe this interest can firstly be explained by what he saw as an important difference between the army and the Church: the army does not demand that its soldiers identify with the general. Yet within the

¹⁹ S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.89.

²⁰ Idem, p.90.

²¹ S. Freud, *Psychical (or Mental) Treatment*, p.296.

²² S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, pp.93ff.

²³ W. Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*, Oxford University Press, London, 1953 (originally published in 1916).

Church²⁴ the faithful are indeed urged to identify with their leader, Christ. A Christian thus identifies in two ways: with the leader and the group. That makes the Church an interesting case for the analysis of identification.

According to Freud, the artificial group is determined by the “illusion” that there is a leader – Christ, a general – who loves all the members of the group equally.²⁵ The organization stands or falls with this illusion. Christians are brothers and sisters; Christ is, as it were, an older brother or father. The bond to the leader is also the origin of the mutual bonding. In order to strengthen this relationship-through-love thesis, Freud proceeded to a discussion of the consequences of such a bond being broken. Thus the war neuroses and the disintegration of the German army during the First World War constituted a protest against the loveless relationship between soldier and superior. The love-relationship between members of the group (horizontal) can also be broken, in which case the result is panic. Here for the first time Freud challenged McDougall, who believed that panic revealed the increase of affectivity within a group most clearly.²⁶ The essence of panic was fear which arose from danger perceived by a few and then spread as panic. For Freud, however, panic was a sign of “relaxation in the libidinal structure of the group”.²⁷ Panic fear presupposed the dissolution of affective bonds, generally as a consequence of the disintegration of the bond to the leader. The libido, not fear, was the key to understanding a crowd.

We already know how Freud approached love. It is a term that is not opposed to fear but to hate. Outbursts of violence – hate which was repressed when the love-relations were strong – occur when mutual love weakens or is threatened. Yet even when the mutual love is strong there is hate, hatred for those who do not belong to the group. According to Freud, this is why Christianity is always essentially intolerant.²⁸ Without a doubt Freud was drawing here on his personal experiences. In chapter one we saw how he was cursed as a “dirty Jew” by the riff-raff who failed to credit him with Christian brotherly love when he opened the window in a train compartment.

6.4 Emotional bonds

Understanding a crowd means comprehending the ambivalent feelings of love and hate. Every love relationship is accompanied by hostile feelings which are repressed. What was already valid for parent-child relationships also applies to larger entities and as the differences between groups become larger, hate becomes more visible.

²⁴ By Church Freud meant every community of believers. Concretely, he took the Catholic Church as a “type”. S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.93.

²⁵ Idem, p.94.

²⁶ Idem, pp.96-97.

²⁷ Idem, p.96.

²⁸ Idem, p.99.

This ambivalence exists and in fact remains unexplained: Freud referred to the speculative life and death instincts which he derived from the ambivalence of love and hate, attraction and aversion.²⁹ Aversion here is aversion towards the external world which threatens the ego. Freud now called this the distinguishing feature of narcissism which can only be superseded by libidinous bonding to another person. Why does this turn to others occur? The libido concentrates on satisfaction and draws in those people as objects who can contribute to this. Freud also called this “a change from egoism to altruism”.³⁰ We are already familiar with this principle. The love-bond in a crowd can also be seen as the outcome of this turn to objects, but in a crowd the mutual bonds are not determined by a direct sexual goal. We are dealing here with a sublimated love. Freud called these desexualized emotional bonds identifications and distinguished them from (sexual) object choices.

Freud introduced the term identification from his analysis of narcissism, love and hate. He now thought that this mechanism in psychoanalysis had actually already been identified, namely in the analysis of the Oedipus complex.³¹ Without him having actually mentioned identification, we have indeed already seen this mechanism. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (elaborating on Baldwin’s *Mental Development*) Freud had already been interested in imitation and the internalization of an “ideal self, my ‘ought’ set before me”. He had linked it in particular to the child (boy) and the relationship with his father whom he saw as an authority and rival. In *Group Psychology* he formulated it as follows: the boy has a special interest (epistemophilic instinct) in his father, wants to be like him, wants to take his place. He takes his father into himself “as his model”. This identification must be differentiated from the bond to the mother who is a sexual object for the boy. The actual Oedipus complex results from these two bonds: the identification with the father leads to the boy wanting to take his place with his mother. This identification has a “hostile colouring”. In other words, identification is by nature ambivalent. Freud had also already demonstrated that there were sadistic components to sexual object relations. This ambivalence is not lost in the sublimation (as desexualization). Thus he saw the transition from narcissism to “bonding to another person” as taking place via the Oedipus complex. Identification meant that an ego wanted “to be” his or her example. As an idea this can be set apart from the other as a sexual object where the formula is: I want “to have” the other. Of these two, identification was the most original. After all, it stemmed from narcissism (primary identification).³²

²⁹ Idem, p.102.

³⁰ Idem, p.103.

³¹ Idem, p.105. See also J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, p.188.

³² S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, pp.106-107. Also, D. Anzieu, “Freud’s Group Psychology: Background, Significance, and Influence”, pp.50-51; J.-M. Quinodoz, *Reading Freud*, p.198-199. On primary identification see J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, p.189, p.192; M. Frommknicht-Hitzler, *Die Bedeutung von Idealisierung und Idealbildung für das Selbstgefühl. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit den Narzißmustheorien Freuds und Kohuts*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg, 1994, p.46.

It is possible that object choice can become identification through regression, whereby it can perhaps appear that the object choice is more original than the identification.³³ Freud believed that this for example was the core of hysteria and hysterical symptoms. The formula for this – Freud did not supply it – would run: “If you cannot have who you want, you can always still (partially) be who you wanted to have.” In that case identification is effected by the sense of guilt. With reference to the Dora case, hysterical symptoms are, after all, an expression of an identification which has arisen via a sense of guilt on account of hostile feelings towards the mother and object love for the father. He called a similar identification not only a regression, but henceforth chiefly introjection: the ego absorbs the qualities (usually a single specific trait) of the object.³⁴ Study of hysteria revealed that such identification could be contagious. Girlfriends, for example, can adopt each other’s hysterical symptoms.³⁵ The mechanism here is not compassion (which is an effect, incidentally), but identification once again. The other (a friend) recognizes in herself an analogy with the one. What then is the nature of this analogy which drives the girlfriends of an hysteric to develop hysterical symptoms themselves? Freud named a single principle: the sense of guilt.³⁶ The girlfriends recognize in the hysterical symptoms the underlying Oedipal desires in the other and also in themselves. That awakens the sense of guilt regarding the desire and precisely because of this it is possible for a quality – the symptom, pain – to be introjected into one’s own ego. We see here once again in the details of examples and evidentiary material the contours of known central thoughts and bonds: emotional ambivalence, the Oedipus complex and the sense of guilt.

6.5 Identification: from Oedipus complex to sense of guilt

Freud introduced the term identification via the analysis of group emotional bonds. In so doing he set the term apart from “being in love”, but without defining this latter phenomenon. He only suggested that in bonding as a group the members were not pursuing a sexual goal. The difference between identification and being in love is fundamental to subsequent development, yet both share their origin in narcissism and appear related. After an introduction to identification, the chapter that followed was about being in love (and hypnosis).³⁷ The analysis of the first object choice was now the starting point.

³³ S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, pp.106-107.

³⁴ Idem, p.109. Here, according to Laplanche and Pontalis, Freud actually discerned two other forms of identification (in addition to primary identification), namely secondary identification as regressive substitute for a lost love object (for example in melancholia) and hysteric identification as identification with a specific trait. J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, p.189.

³⁵ S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.107.

³⁶ “The other girls would like to have a secret love affair too, and under the influence of a sense of guilt they also accept the suffering involved in it.” Idem.

³⁷ Idem, pp.111-116.

For a young boy his mother is the first love object towards which sexual urges are directed. The boy must relinquish this object, however. From that moment on the sexual urges are inhibited and are, in fact, replaced by tender, non-sensual feelings of love. During puberty the sexual drive becomes insistent (again). If all goes well then, the sensual (sexual) and non-sensual feelings come together in being in love. The hallmark of being in love is sexual overvaluation, that is to say, the object cannot be criticized and its qualities are very highly esteemed.³⁸ The object is now more than just a sexual object. Freud now also called this idealization and further defined it as an “overflow of narcissistic libido to an object”.³⁹

Thus later something like idealization can arise from the Oedipus complex. Idealization can be seen in being in love with the sexual object, but also in the tendency to accept the other’s authority. In being in love the object is elevated beyond all reproach. It is as if one’s conscience has been blinded. “The object has been put in the place of the ego ideal”, but that old ego ideal is no longer an internal norm for the ego. It is “impoverished”, it submits to the elevated ideal, the other person.⁴⁰ Here lies the crucial difference between idealization and identification. In identification an object is not substituted for the ego ideal but “put in the place of the ego”.⁴¹ It thereby “enriches” the ego.

After this first reconnaissance of the terms identification, being in love and idealization, suddenly hypnosis is once again the topic. After all, idealization could be linked not only to being in love, but also with the belief in authority. The relationship between hypnotizer and hypnotized can be described in terms of idealization. For Freud that relationship represents a model for the relationship with the leader of a group. The leader is idealized, yet is not the object of being in love although he/she is elevated beyond all criticism. He now defined a group with an analogy from hypnosis: it is “a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego”.⁴² There is thus first the idealization of the leader, then identification with the other members of the group.

In light of the hypothesis regarding the group, it is important that Freud now paid attention to horizontal identification and the question of how the mutual bond must be explained. Freud pointed out that within the group there is influence from individual to individual, an influence which when considering the spread of hysterical symptoms could be regarded as imitation or contagion. There is identification with the other members of the group. In order to explain this

³⁸ Idem, p.112.

³⁹ Idem. See also J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, pp.186-187; P. Moyaert, *Begeren en vereren*, pp.97-110.

⁴⁰ Idem, p.113. Freud elaborated here on an issue already addressed in *On Narcissism*, the idealization of the love object. S. Freud, *On Narcissism*, pp.93-95.

⁴¹ S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.114.

⁴² Idem, p.116.

phenomenon, Freud entered into a discussion with William Trotter, who had developed a theory of social instinct, the “herd instinct”.⁴³

Trotter distinguished four basic instincts.⁴⁴ In addition to “instincts as self-preservation, nutrition and sex”, he also names “gregariousness”, an instinct for living in groups, in short, a social instinct. That instinct is a weapon in the battle against natural selection. After all, the complexity of organisms and the consequent variety of social forms increased the chances of survival. Although Trotter hardly mentioned Darwin, it is nonetheless clear that his social instinct as compared to natural selection was a reference to Darwin’s theory in *The Descent of Man* of the social instinct, “sympathy”, and its importance for a group. In chapter four we saw that Darwin derived moral qualities and the conscience from this social instinct. He also dealt with the social instinct in a section of his work on the mental powers of man including the moral sense.⁴⁵ When Trotter listed the characteristics of the social instinct, he was also dealing with the development of morality. In principle an individual is egoistic and will put the group in danger when he pursues pleasure. That egoism belongs to the lower qualities of man, what Trotter called the “unconscious self”. That egoism is characterized by irrationality, the ability to imitate, cruelty and a lack of self-control. It is through these egoistic characteristics that people are capable of being influenced, that they are suggestible. The social instinct is thus nothing other than “the suggestible subconscious self”. This suggestibility manifests itself in higher human characteristics and underlies altruism. A similar development is a question of group dynamics. Trotter paid no attention to the leader, but wrote of “the group voice”. Indeed, the development of language is crucial here for the development of morality. Being spoken to can mean not only influence, but also judgement. This is why herd animals (such as people) have a “conscience and feelings of guilt and of duty”.⁴⁶ Conscience and feelings of guilt are thus a consequence of a social instinct.

Freud’s primary criticisms of Trotter concentrated on the fact that he paid no attention to the leader and on the existence of the social instinct. In contrast to Trotter, Freud stated that social abilities can only arise from relationships with parents and siblings: feelings of envy and hostility are repressed in order to be able to count on parental love and it is from this process that identification with siblings takes place. The group feeling thus ensures a certain social justice: “Whatever I must renounce must also be denied by the others.” Within the group this mechanism is “the root of social conscience and the sense of duty”.⁴⁷ This social conscience is presented here as synonymous with what Freud had previously called the sense

⁴³ Idem, pp.117-121.

⁴⁴ W. Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*, pp.5ff.

⁴⁵ Ch. Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, chapter III.

⁴⁶ W. Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*, p.26. This train of thought implied that other herd animals can also have a sense of guilt. Trotter mentioned dogs as an example, because a dog “knows” when he is going to be punished for a misdeed. In that sense the dog has a “sense of sin”.

⁴⁷ S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.121.

of guilt in hysteric identification. Freud subsequently briefly formulated the origin of the social feelings, including the sense of guilt: “The social feeling is based upon the reversal of what was first a hostile feeling into a positively-toned tie in the nature of an identification”.⁴⁸ Based on the analogy with siblings who focus on parental love, Freud saw the upheaval as a consequence of a bond to a person outside or above the group. The definition of a group was now also adjusted: the members of the group must be equal and can thus identify with each other because they all want to be ruled by a leader. In order to be able to receive the leader’s love the crowd must adhere to the precept of equality between members of the group. This criticism of Trotter also meant of course a denial of the innate “unconscious self”, an innate entity or organization: the ego is a construction and what preceded it may not be called an organization.

Freud proceeded further with the formulation of a link between his ideas regarding the crowd and the leader and the primal horde thesis he proposed in *Totem and Taboo* based on the negation of a social instinct and the consequent implicit criticism of part of Darwin’s theories.⁴⁹ The primal model, the primal horde is visible anew in every group. The sons’ sense of guilt about having murdered their father lives on in the group’s social feelings and the sense of guilt regarding repressed feelings of jealousy and hostility. Put another way, every artificial group reveals a regression to the characteristics of the primal horde: the surrendering of individuality, the dominance of affectivity, the carrying out of assignments without criticism, the orientation of thoughts and feelings in a single direction. It now becomes clear what Freud meant when he wrote that in artificial groups structures buried elsewhere can be laid bare: it is indeed within an artificial group that a “revival of the primal horde” is visible.⁵⁰ In the beginning there was the father, who was independent and whose will needed no confirmation, and the group of sons. “He, at the very beginning of the history of mankind, was the ‘superman’ whom Nietzsche only expected from the future”.⁵¹ The primal father-*Übermensch* has a “masterful nature” and is “absolutely narcissistic”.⁵² This primal father has an ego that is still barely libidinally connected to other people. It is this father who forces the sons into sexual abnegation and consequently into emotional links with each other. This structure is also visible in artificial groups such as the Church and the army. To this he added that the primal father-son relationship is also recognizable in hypnosis: the hypnotizer takes the place of the father just as the primal father once dominated the sons’ ego ideal.⁵³

⁴⁸ Idem.

⁴⁹ The criticism of Trotter is important because it implies that the sense of guilt is not the effect of innate social instincts.

⁵⁰ Idem, p.123.

⁵¹ Idem.

⁵² Idem, p.124. This idea of the *Übermensch*’s absolute narcissism is not only a clear reference to Friedrich Nietzsche’s philosophy, but also to the ideas of Näcké and Rank on the *Übermensch*.

⁵³ Idem, pp.125-128.

Freud took this point even further. A modern individual participates in all kinds of groups and via identification has incorporated various models into his ego ideal. This is the root of an individual's "independence and originality".⁵⁴ Simultaneously, it appears that an individual is ready to trade in his ego ideal for a leader who embodies that ideal. He wrote of a "grade in the ego" when he dealt with the ego ideal.⁵⁵ This is thus about an inner partition. In the group the ego identifies with the group members; the leader takes the place of the ego ideal. From group psychology we have thus returned to ego analysis.

Freud pointed out that in his work he repeatedly encountered differentiations in the human mind. Even in his earliest psychoanalytic work he was concerned with the difference between the ego and the unconsciously repressed and he was constantly confronted with his patients' reluctance and resistance to absorb one into the other. However, he preferred to refer to narcissism because systematic ego analysis had begun with that term. With the differentiation between ego and ego ideal he now thought he had the key to explain patients' resistance. It was the ego ideal that limited and set rules for the ego: "The ego ideal comprises the sum of all the limitations in which the ego has to acquiesce".⁵⁶ Yet this limitation was welcomed by the ego because the defence of the unconsciously repressed ensured that the ego "could be satisfied with itself": it was better to be limited by the ego ideal, which provided a lovely norm to which the ego can conform, than be overwhelmed by that which has been repressed. There was thus a narcissistic reason why the ego embraced a limiting ego ideal and it is here that the reason why people so gladly embrace leaders must be sought.

The idea that the ego welcomed an ego ideal can be positively interpreted when we consider that the ego ideal is not just a restrictive reaction to underlying aggression such as in *Totem and Taboo* or even an enforced model, but also offers a concrete form in which the ego can realize itself.⁵⁷ Another positive interpretation could be that Freud championed a certain idealization of leaders.⁵⁸ However, we must remember here that Freud did not equate the formation of an ego ideal with the idealization of a leader. We must also remember that Freud was not interested in praising the longing for authority, but in giving identification a central place and showing that it was there that narcissism remained preserved and could even be strengthened.

At the end of *Group Psychology* Freud returned to the case histories and his position that identification was linked to narcissism and the Oedipus complex. On account of the narcissistic foundation to the ego ideal, Freud could speak of

⁵⁴ Idem, p.129.

⁵⁵ Idem.

⁵⁶ Idem, p.131.

⁵⁷ J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, p.184.

⁵⁸ P. Roazen, *Freud: Political and Social Thought*, Vintage Books, New York, 1970, p.230.

a “triumph” when ego and ego ideal coincide: it increased self-awareness.⁵⁹ On the other hand the tension between ego and ego ideal must be denoted with the sense of guilt.⁶⁰ He now pointed to melancholia: it was there that the accusation by the ego ideal against the ego was evident. In melancholia a lost person is “set up again inside the ego” and strongly condemned by the ego ideal.⁶¹ The intense self-reproaches are an expression of the enormous difference between ego and ego ideal.

With this we have finally arrived at the sense of guilt that reflects the tension between the ego and the ego ideal, but that simultaneously can be further differentiated. After all, identification in hysteria arose based on recognition of Oedipal desires and the accompanying sense of guilt. In other pathologies we do not find a similar contamination. In melancholia, for example, the ego’s place is taken by an object via identification, not because one recognizes one’s own guilt in another, but because the culpable other is lost and only by identification can it be retained. Various identifications thus bring different senses of guilt or self-reproaches with them and vice versa. Ultimately we can say that Freud’s example of horizontal and vertical identifications within a group is a reworking of an old theme: he laid attenuated links between the Oedipus complex and the sense of guilt. Yet these links, as a result of the first explorations of the term identification, are still far from clear. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud attempted to clarify these links.⁶²

6.6 “The only pre-psychoanalytic thinker”

We have just noted a reference to Nietzsche. Before we continue this chapter, we should now spend some time examining Freud’s relationship with Nietzsche. It appears that Nietzsche had an important influence on Freud vis-à-vis the genesis of *The Ego and the Id* and his new formulations of intrapsychic structures and the sense of guilt. It is naturally beyond the scope of the present work to provide a thorough analysis of Nietzsche’s thought on, for example, the *Übermensch* and morality. We shall deal here with main themes, as Freud incorporated them into his thinking. The parallels between the two are have been extensively documented

⁵⁹ This triumph is most clearly visible in mania. S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.132.

⁶⁰ Idem, p.131; M. Vansina, *Het super-ego*, pp.165-172.

⁶¹ S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.133.

⁶² *Group Psychology* can be seen as an important step towards the development of the second topic model in *The Ego and the Id*. That meant that the psychological apparatus was no longer predominantly described in terms of conscious, preconscious and unconscious systems or psychic representation and related effects, but instead the structural object relations become prominent. Here the Oedipus complex, identification and also the sense of guilt gain importance. J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, p.189.

by others.⁶³ At the same time, reconstruction provides insight into the roots of *The Ego and the Id* within Freud's own work.

Incidentally, it is not always clear which of Nietzsche's works Freud read himself or heard about through others, specifically from his followers. The fact is that many of his followers, for example Otto Rank, Sabine Spielrein, Alfred von Winterstein, Eduard Hitschmann, Viktor Tausk⁶⁴ and Lou Andreas-Salomé, were familiar with Nietzsche. Andreas-Salomé had known Nietzsche well and had also written a biography about him.⁶⁵ Yet a problem for Freud was that not only did his faithful followers and sympathizers cite Nietzsche, but so did opponents such as Adler and Jung. Another, more profound reason for Freud's circumspection with Nietzsche lay in his own recognition of similarities.⁶⁶ The correspondence with Arnold Zweig provides a beautiful example of Freud's anxiety to acknowledge Nietzsche's profound influence upon him. Zweig wrote in December 1930 that he saw Freud as someone who had completed Nietzsche's thinking. Psychoanalysis "reversed all values" which Nietzsche strove to plumb including the origin of moral concepts and tragedy, the scientific description of the human mind, the triumph over Christianity and the liberation of the repressed ascetic ideal. Freud reacted very guardedly. The article Zweig wanted to write on the affinity between Freud and Nietzsche would have to be written without any information from Freud himself.⁶⁷

The question here must chiefly be how Freud understood Nietzsche and how Nietzsche could have influenced Freud's thinking. Such a reconstruction could begin with two Wednesday evenings in 1908 during which the third part of *On the Genealogy of Morality* and Nietzsche's "autobiography" *Ecce Homo*

⁶³ For example R. Lehrer, *Nietzsche's Presence in Freud's Life and Thought. On the Origins of a Psychology of Dynamic Unconscious Mental Functioning*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1995; R. Gasser, *Nietzsche und Freud*, De Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 1997; G. Gödde, *Traditionslinien des "Unbewußten"*; P.-L. Assoun, *Freud and Nietzsche*, Athlone Press, London, 2000.

⁶⁴ It was Tausk who wrote in 1914: Nietzsche is the "only pre-psychoanalytic thinker" who in the art and content of his thought recognized the contours and intents of an affective constellation. V. Tausk, "Psychoanalyse der Philosophie und psychoanalytische Philosophie", in *Gesammelte psychoanalytische und literarische Schriften*, H. Metzger (ed.), Medusa, Vienna, Berlin, 1983, pp.124-133 (127). Tausk argued here that Nietzsche not only defended a dualistic world view, but also explored the dynamics of repression. After all, a central theme in Nietzsche's writings was the differentiation between repressed desires and the social and moral relations in civilized society. Also, Nietzsche had put forward the idea that the repressed desires actually form the foundation for repressing thought systems.

⁶⁵ L. Andreas-Salomé, *Friedrich Nietzsche in seinen Werken*, Insel, Frankfurt, 2000 (originally published in 1894). Andreas-Salomé approached Nietzsche's work as a self-confession. She did so not only as a closed philosophical system, but as a reformulated result of self-analysis. In the Freud-Andreas-Salomé correspondence Nietzsche is not mentioned.

⁶⁶ Adler was very impressed by Nietzsche's thoughts on power; Jung called upon Nietzsche in his conflict with Freud in 1912. R. Lehrer, *Nietzsche's Presence in Freud's Life and Thought*, p.120. In 1926 Rank also called upon Nietzsche in his conflict with Freud.

⁶⁷ S. Freud, A. Zweig, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig*, E. Freud (ed.), Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc., New York, 1970, pp.22-25.

were discussed.⁶⁸ On the first of these two evenings, 1 April 1908, Hitschmann introduced *On the Genealogy of Morality*.⁶⁹ He summarized the first two parts and subsequently read from and commented upon the third part on “ascetic ideals”. The discussion concentrated on Nietzsche’s person: there was a character hidden behind his work. After Adler had declared that he saw a strong affinity between Nietzsche and psychoanalysis, Freud remarked that he was not familiar with Nietzsche’s work – which was not entirely true⁷⁰ – but had tried now and again to read him to no avail. He then made a remarkable statement: he assured his followers that Nietzsche had had no influence upon his thinking. He qualified this by saying that often when justifying a discovery or a new theory in the face of rejection by critics he discovered how he had come to a certain train of thought and upon which authorities he could thus rely. He subsequently pointed out that despite similarities with psychoanalytic ideas, Nietzsche had not identified a number of things, including the importance of infantile sexuality.

On the evening during which *Ecco Homo* was discussed, 28 October 1908, Freud reiterated the difficulty he had with Nietzsche precisely because he saw so many similarities with his own thinking and because the richness of Nietzsche’s ideas so overwhelmed him that he could get no further than repeatedly reading the same half page. On this evening his followers again linked Nietzsche’s character with all kinds of pathologies and Freud opined that Nietzsche’s enigmatic character was far from being fully understood. Freud’s interest here appeared chiefly to be in Nietzsche’s considerable ability for self-analysis.⁷¹ In this vein he observed that Nietzsche’s self-analysis was so fascinating because it resulted in an imperative. What Freud encountered in him was what he would later call a splitting between the ego and the ego ideal, between “is” and “ought” (a moral view). In addition, Nietzsche charted the deepest “instincts” through every psychic layer. Although Freud was not able to work this out further, we see here the first contours of a tripartite division: the “instincts”, “is” and “ought”.

This tripartite division is subsequently visible in the closing section of *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*, in particular the final line of this case where the language is strongly reminiscent of the third part of Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morality* where he writes on ascetic ideals.⁷² Freud suddenly wrote about “asceticism” and an “ascetic personality”. This ascetic person is a

⁶⁸ For more on these evenings see R. Lehrer, *Nietzsche’s Presence in Freud’s Life and Thought*, pp.103-117; G. Gödde, *Traditionslinien des “Unbewußten”*, p.289-292.

⁶⁹ H. Nunberg, E. Federn (eds.), *Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, Volume 1-4*, International Universities Press, New York, 1962-1975, Vol. 1, pp.355-361.

⁷⁰ Through a *Leseverein* which he joined in his student years Freud had already become acquainted with some aspects of Nietzsche’s earlier writings. In 1900 Freud bought Nietzsche’s collected writings. G. Gödde, *Traditionslinien des “Unbewußten”*, p.111; P. Gay, *Freud*, p.45.

⁷¹ H. Nunberg, E. Federn (eds.), *Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, Vol. 2*, pp.25-33. See also E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol.2*, pp.343-344.

⁷² S. Freud, *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*, pp.248-249.

designation for one part of a trio. A person is composed of three personalities. There is an unconscious with repressed primal “evil” instincts. Then there are two preconscious parts between which consciousness fluctuates. The first preconscious part is the “official ego”. The other preconscious part is the “ascetic personality”, which primarily consists of reaction formation against unconscious urges. The ascetic person can thus also be traced back to the unconscious drives from which it was formed as a reaction. We see here Nietzschean vocabulary creeping into Freud’s text where the emphasis lies on what Nietzsche discovered through self-analysis.

On the Genealogy of Morality can be read as a continuous analysis and articulation of the tension between the deepest human motives (man as “predator”) and their repression. Originally there is predator man and his battle of person vs. person, self against the other.⁷³ At a certain moment this battle is internalized and a mental conflict arises. There are instincts which at a given moment are no longer “discharged outwards”, but are curbed, turn inward and are “directed against the person themselves”. This is where Nietzsche located the genesis of “bad conscience”, in short, the tension between the most profound will (drive) and what Nietzsche then called an “ideal”, the self-imposed limitation which is also honoured by society as a whole. Man views his natural urge “angrily” and has created for himself an (ascetic) ideal against which he measures himself and which has split his mind. Now, the partition I cite here is not so clearly formulated by Nietzsche. It is evident that “the angry view” is a reaction to the original, natural cruel drives. At first sight it is less evident whether the angry view is actually directed at the drives or the conscious ego. The latter is the more obvious choice because the self-curtailment, the ideal that turns against the person themselves, “is” the cruel instinct (or a continuation of it) which in a civilized world insists on self-control.⁷⁴ What is important here is that Freud read Nietzsche as an analyst of the mind and that he thus also had an eye for his description of man as a split being, a being in conflict. This is what comes through in the final section of the Rat Man case.⁷⁵

⁷³ F. Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral. Ein Streitschrift*, in *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe, Vol. 5*, G. Colli, M. Montinari (eds.), DTV/De Gruyter, Munich, Berlin, 1999, p.306, p.326. Compare F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, in *Sämtliche Werke, Vol. 6*, pp.352-353.

⁷⁴ Idem, p.322. These Nietzschean ideas were elaborated by a follower of Freud’s, Leo Kaplan, in an article on the tragic hero. This hero met with disaster on account of his “bad conscience”, which stemmed from a sense of guilt because of sin. He also indicated that this conscience preserved parental character traits. L. Kaplan, “Der tragische Held und der Verbrecher. Ein Beitrag zur Psychologie des Tragischen”, in *Imago 4* (1915-1916), pp.96-124.

⁷⁵ Incidentally, the Rat Man himself referred to Nietzsche in his therapy with Freud. He quoted from *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* to express his ambivalent feelings, his repressed feelings of hate and his sense of guilt. S. Freud, *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*, p.184. Compare: F. Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, in *Sämtliche Werke, Vol. 5*, p.86.

Today it seems obvious that Jones was correct that Nietzsche's ideas on the bad conscience, i.e., the sense of guilt, resonate in *Totem and Taboo*.⁷⁶ This position has much to recommend it, chiefly because Nietzsche also argues his case for the origins of bad conscience within a Darwinistic model of man evolving from predator to domesticated animal, from brutal egoist to compassionate altruist, and in addition sees the sense of guilt as the key to understanding culture. However, *Totem and Taboo* also presents problems regarding Nietzsche's influence. The first of these is that there is not a single reference to Nietzsche. Even more important is the fact that the sense of guilt was an old topic for Freud, which could have developed with no influence from Nietzsche at all. In Freud the sense of guilt was primarily concerned with infantile desires and it was exactly that theme, so Freud said one evening in 1908, that Nietzsche ignored. The entire analysis of obsessional neurosis revolved around that point. Freud used obsessional neurosis as a model for his theories in *Totem and Taboo* and his speculations regarding what actually happened in humankind's infancy.⁷⁷

There is however, as Jones thought, a certain effect of Nietzsche's bad conscience on Freud's sense of guilt. In my opinion, however, it was only after the introduction of the term narcissism that Freud reached a true synthesis. When Freud equated the primal father with the *Übermensch* in *Group Psychology* he not only preserved the character of the *Übermensch* but also inserted it into a primal myth of patricide. In other words, Nietzsche's influence on Freud's thought regarding the sense of guilt is only visible after the introduction of narcissism, the theory of the ego and ego ideal, and the tension between them. I believe that this effect is also found in the problems surrounding the inheritance of phylogenetic material. Nietzsche too wrote about a kind of inheritance of a bad conscience down through history. This inheritance must certainly not be thought of as biological. He emphasized heavily that the bad conscience was repeatedly an individual reaction to drives considered to be bad.⁷⁸

After those Wednesday evenings in 1908 Nietzsche became the most studied and cited philosopher among Freud's followers. As summarized by Tausk, Nietzsche was "the only pre-psychoanalytic thinker".⁷⁹ Freud himself kept his distance, but in the years following the publication of *Totem and Taboo* we see that Nietzsche did indeed play a role in the introduction of the concept of narcissism. Via Näcke and Rank we have already discovered a line in which Nietzsche also played a role: the narcissist, the egoist as *Übermensch*.

⁷⁶ E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 3*, p.284. A comparison between Nietzsche's concept of bad conscience and Freud's views on the sense of guilt can be found in R. Gasser, *Nietzsche und Freud*, pp.295-312.

⁷⁷ We could say here that Nietzsche and Freud held different views on the origin of bad conscience or the sense of guilt. According to Nietzsche, bad conscience is the result of the internalization of aggression due to a lack of enemies or conflict. F. Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, p.323.

⁷⁸ Idem, pp.270ff.

⁷⁹ V. Tausk, "Psychoanalyse der Philosophie und psychoanalytische Philosophie", p.127.

The ego and the ego ideal are central to Freud's theory of narcissism. That ego ideal is a yardstick used to measure the ego. Simultaneously, that ideal is the condition for the repression of drives.⁸⁰ The ego ideal is a narcissistic ideal, a self-image that is both a critical agency and prevents the ego from being overrun by the drives. We could say that here Freud picked up the thread of the closing section of the Rat Man case where he formulated in thinly disguised Nietzschean terms a careful tripartite division of the mental apparatus. That Nietzsche played a background role is even more clear when we realize that Freud introduced that ideal in *On Narcissism* from an exchange with Adler and his exegesis of Nietzsche's "will to power".⁸¹ In short, Freud probably borrowed the term ego ideal from Nietzsche's ideas on the ascetic ideal and indicated as much with the differentiation between the ego and the ego ideal after Nietzsche's division of "is" and "ought", between ego and ideal.⁸² We can now extend this line of thought to one of Freud's most important works, *The Ego and the Id*. In that study Freud developed a tripartite division of the mental apparatus, a new division into ego, id and superego, but also a division whose contours we recognize from the Rat Man case. The ego is indeed not a new concept; the id (*Es*) and the superego (*Über-Ich*) are, however. These two new concepts both betray Nietzsche's influence.

Freud himself stated emphatically that he borrowed the concept of the id from Georg Groddeck, who in turn had taken it from Nietzsche.⁸³ We could ask ourselves why he explicitly mentioned this. In Groddeck's *Das Buch vom Es* [The Book of the Id] we find no references to Nietzsche.⁸⁴ Moreover, the term "id" is not easy to find in Nietzsche's work.⁸⁵ Why then does Freud refer to Nietzsche?

In 1917 the amateur psychoanalyst Groddeck contacted Freud because he thought that he saw certain similarities between his ideas about the id and Freud's unconscious.⁸⁶ To Freud, however, he was a wild analyst whom he preferred to keep at a distance, also because Groddeck's ideas bore strong similarities to those of Jung and Adler. Yet the correspondence continued. The situation changed when Freud re-examined his terminology: unconscious, preconscious and conscious are phenomenological terms which were no longer sufficient for Freud's new classification. He postulated an ego and a repressed component which was split from the ego. These overlap and the ego is thus also partly unconscious. Freud

⁸⁰ S. Freud, *On Narcissism*, pp.93-94.

⁸¹ Idem, p.92, p.99.

⁸² The concept of "ideal" as indicating an inner psychic standard only gained importance in Freudian vocabulary after 1908 (after the Nietzsche evenings), notably from *On Narcissism* onwards.

⁸³ S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.23.

⁸⁴ G. Groddeck, *Das Buch vom Es. Psychoanalytische Briefe an eine Freundin*, Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna, Zurich, 1926, pp.10-11. Groddeck defined the id as the "unknown" which "ruled everything man does and happened to him".

⁸⁵ J.C. Bos, *Es muss sein. Eine Untersuchung über die Geschichte und Theorie des Begriffes Es bei Georg Groddeck (1866-1934)*, Kleinverlag für Literatur und Sexualwissenschaft, Herne, 1990, pp.62-71.

⁸⁶ S. Freud, G. Groddeck, *Briefwechsel*, pp.11ff.

wanted to name the split, repressed part the id. Thus although Freud borrowed the term, he certainly did not borrow Groddeck's theory. When Groddeck reacted to *The Ego and the Id* in May 1923, he compared reading the book to which he had contributed to ploughing a rocky field. He thus revealed his disappointment, not only because Freud sought to credit Nietzsche, but also because Freud's id meant something completely different from his own.⁸⁷

There are two reasons why Freud borrowed this term. He cited Nietzsche because he thought his term matched Nietzsche's ideas on the repressed instincts, from which an ideal could emerge that would subsequently be used against the instincts. Conceptualized within my hypothesis, Freud wrote at the end of the Rat Man case in Nietzschean terms about another kind of division within the unconscious, preconscious and conscious, and when the last of these then came under fire the Nietzsche-inspired division came to the fore. That is the first reason for the reference to Nietzsche.⁸⁸ The second reason dovetails immediately with the first: in 1913 Hitschmann wrote an article in *Imago* on the unconscious in philosophy. He cited Nietzsche's adage *Es denkt in mir*, an adage in which the id expresses what Schopenhauer called *Wille* and in psychoanalysis is referred to as the unconscious. The link between the id and the unconscious was thus also established by one of Freud's followers before Groddeck dealt with the issue.⁸⁹

In *Group Psychology* Freud had proposed that the tension between the ego and the ego ideal was the sense of guilt. He incorporated Nietzsche's ideas on the bad conscience into the definition of this tension. The parallels are manifest.⁹⁰ According to Nietzsche, a bad conscience stemmed from the "evil" instincts which are no longer directed at other people, but are internalized and cause conflict between the instincts and the struggle against them by the conscience which had set up "negative ideals". In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche succinctly summarized: the conscience is the cruel instinct that turns against the person itself when it can no longer be discharged in the outside world.⁹¹ This intrinsic indulgence of cruelty against oneself signifies an abandonment of an expression of the instinctive to the outside world. In other words, this internalization is "unegoistic". One's own instincts are now examined critically. One might ask why an individual would permit this kind of self-curtailed. However, Nietzsche saw the negative ideal,

⁸⁷ Idem, pp.84-87. J.C. Bos, *Es muss sein*, p.69.

⁸⁸ An indication of this interest in Nietzsche is a short passage in *A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis* from 1917 where Freud argues that "the ego is not master in its own house", referring to Schopenhauer and "famous philosophers" who could be cited as "forerunners" of this idea. It is most likely that Nietzsche is included here. S. Freud, *A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis*, SE XVII, p.143. In his 1924 autobiographical study Freud mentioned Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in one breath as important forerunners on key issues in psychoanalysis. S. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, pp.59-60.

⁸⁹ E. Hitschmann, "Schopenhauer. Versuch einer Psychoanalyse des Philosophen", in *Imago* 2 (1913), pp.101-174 (172). See also R. Gasser, *Nietzsche und Freud*, p.117.

⁹⁰ See for example A. Lambertino, *Psychoanalyse und Moral bei Freud*, p.126.

⁹¹ F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, p.352.

the ascetic ideal, also as a protective instinct aimed at staying alive. The repression of the instincts made it possible to conserve life.⁹² The ascetic ideal was not conscious; it was an “unconscious imperative” and the ideal’s struggle against the instincts was an unconscious conflict. A bad conscience, the tension between these two, was thus also an unconscious sense of guilt. But that unconscious conflict did ensure that via that self-curtailment a bourgeois moral illusion arose which raised humankind to a higher level. Put another way, the domesticated was elevated above the predator.⁹³ Freud recognized in Nietzsche elements such as the double character of the conscience, that on the one hand it could rage mercilessly against the ego and on the other simultaneously be embraced as protection against destructive drives, the elaboration of the aggression against oneself, and the linking of the bad conscience (unconscious feelings of guilt) with cultural history.

In *The Ego and the Id* Freud introduced the term superego (*Über-Ich*) to replace the ego ideal. This new term permitted him to demonstrate a clearer link with the ego and the largely unconscious character of the superego. The term ideal always suggested a distance vis-à-vis the ego. In addition, for Freud this term was originally strongly linked to a divided bourgeois morality.⁹⁴ It is for this very reason that the term was no longer sufficient: the superego was extremely internal. That *Über-Ich* also evoked two important reminiscences. The first association was with the *Übermoral* of the neurotic.⁹⁵ Freud had labelled this morality an excessively critical conscience par excellence which is additionally strengthened by cultural morality. The other association was that with the word *Übermensch*. I believe this association was consciously evoked by Freud. He wanted to confirm the link to narcissism, which is exactly what the association with the *Übermensch* achieved. In addition, if we also assume that his ego ideal was also a reference to Nietzsche, this link is all the more clear.

We have now extensively examined the influence of Nietzsche’s ideas on Freud. The importance of this analysis was not to demonstrate a factual relationship between Nietzsche and Freud, but chiefly to show what Freud took from Nietzsche in order to support the core of his own vision. That core is man as a being in conflict whereby that conflict is not only an inner conflict between drives and repressed mechanisms. It was indeed in Nietzsche that Freud also found a link with culture and with authority figures who could be internalized via identification. The tensions people have as beings in conflict were classified by Nietzsche in terms of a sense of guilt (“bad conscience”). That sense of guilt was a key for both

⁹² *Sein Nein, das er zum Leben spricht, bringt wie durch ein Zauber eine Fülle zarterer Ja’s an’s Licht.* F. Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, p.367.

⁹³ *Idem*, p.400.

⁹⁴ Notably in “Civilized” *Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness* Freud had used the term “ideal” to describe the cultural ideal of marriage and the related repression of sexual instincts. Here the term “ideal” was thus solely associated with an outside ideal, not with an inner narcissistic ideal.

⁹⁵ Freud used the term *Übermoral* in *Totem and Taboo* when discussing the analogy between obsessional neurosis and primitive man and establishing a connection between what he called psychical reality and historical reality. S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 160.

Nietzsche and Freud in order to fathom the individual and culture as well as to link the two. What is important here is that both assumed that “good” was not innate. It must thus be developed, transferred or called forth, but because it is never a given, the sense of guilt remains a dominating factor. People can never meet the demands placed on them. By appealing to Nietzsche, Freud was able to emphasize this as central to his work.

6.7 Towards an unconscious sense of guilt

Freud began *The Ego and the Id* with a succinct reiteration of earlier material.⁹⁶ He derived the unconscious, preconscious and conscious from his clinical experience demonstrating the existence of resistance and repression. In a subsequent step, he analysed the ego to which consciousness is connected, which represses and resists the return of the repressed. In this way the ego was linked to consciousness, the repressed and the unconscious. The problem now was that the ego was not conscious of this resistance and it was thus clear that it must be partially unconscious. It is with this observation in mind that he now reformulated his model of the psychical apparatus.

The ego is partially conscious and partially unconscious. In order to chart which part of the ego could be unconscious, Freud posed the question of what it meant when something (in the ego) becomes conscious.⁹⁷ That process took place via the preconscious: unconscious (or preconscious) ideas can become conscious when they are able to link to word presentations.⁹⁸ These word presentations are the remains of memories of what was once perceived consciously (expressed in language). If an idea wants to become conscious, it must be converted into a word presentation, into language.

But how did this relate to pleasure and unpleasure or to the affective charge which is coupled to an idea? Like energy, feelings of unpleasure want to be drained off and thus become insistent (are pushed up). Freud thought these feelings of unpleasure could also become conscious if they could be converted into word presentations. However, repression disconnects affect and representation. This meant that not every affect could automatically be translated into a word presentation. Feelings of unpleasure can thus be insistent without the ego being conscious of this insistence. That meant that there can be unconscious feelings in the sense Freud reiterated in *The Unconscious*: an affect is uncoupled from the original idea and is either repressed or converted into another affect.

⁹⁶ S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, pp.13-18. For a concise introduction to this text see J.-M. Quinodoz, *Reading Freud*, pp.203-211. See also P. Fuchs, *Das Unbewußte in Psychoanalyse und Systemtheorie. Die Herrschaft der Verlautbarung und die Erreichbarkeit des Bewusstseins*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1998, pp.74ff.

⁹⁷ S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.19.

⁹⁸ Idem, pp.20f.

The core of the ego is preconscious and is composed of the system of word presentations that plays an intermediary role between the internal and external worlds. From this definition of the ego Freud then introduced the id: reasoning from the outside in, the ego merges into the id.⁹⁹ The id is certainly unconscious and is composed largely of repressed material. It is spurred on by the drives and guided by the pleasure principle. Freud compared the relationship of the ego and id with the well-known image of the horse and rider: the id hurries along and the ego has no choice but to remain sitting and convert the id's "will" into a action which it claims as its own.¹⁰⁰

The ego can be differentiated from the id not only by virtue of the word-presentations.¹⁰¹ Freud had argued earlier that the ego was a narcissistic construction. It can be viewed as "another object" with a physical surface.¹⁰² The ego as physical surface is moreover symptomatic (and that is reminiscent of hysteria). In other words, the core of the human psyche is the id from which the ego emerges as its surface.

In chapter one we saw how Freud described the ego as a moral character which offered resistance to pressing morally, unwanted drives. In *The Ego and the Id* the ego also stood for civilization. It represented "reason and common sense".¹⁰³ We have already seen that that must also be ascribed to moral character. By bringing up for discussion the difference between the unconscious and the conscious in relation to repression and the ego Freud now also sought to discuss the moral consequences. If the ego is also partly unconscious or preconscious, then it is no longer plausible for the higher social and moral convictions, judgments and assessments to be located in consciousness. The idea that the unconscious is linked to lower, immoral drives and that consciousness is linked to higher values – Freud speaks of "scale of values"¹⁰⁴ – must be jettisoned. It appears as if once again Nietzsche is in the background contributing to his critique of the value of moral stands.

This is the moment for Freud to discuss "unconscious sense of guilt".¹⁰⁵ Conscience, which is generally seen as a higher mental function (compare for example Meynert's Darwinistic argument or the bourgeois society as ideal in Krafft-Ebing's work), largely works unconsciously. The most important example of this is a patient's resistance in analysis. That resistance is, after all, extraordinarily powerful without the person being conscious of it. The unconscious sense of guilt "plays a decisive economic part" in a great number of neuroses "and puts the

⁹⁹ Idem, p.24.

¹⁰⁰ Idem, p.25.

¹⁰¹ In other words, the ego cannot merely be seen as a modification of the id "by the influence of the perceptual system, the representative in the mind of the external world". Idem, p.28.

¹⁰² Idem, pp.25-26. Also, A. Lambertino, *Psychoanalyse und Moral bei Freud*, pp.156-159.

¹⁰³ S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.25.

¹⁰⁴ Idem, p.26.

¹⁰⁵ Idem, p.27.

most powerful obstacles in the way of recovery”. Thus: “Also what is highest in the ego can be unconscious”.¹⁰⁶ Likewise the reverse, the most conscious part of the ego is its surface, its corporality (“body-ego”), and that is traditionally not the most highly elevated part of mankind. Here Freud articulated his *Umwertung aller Werten*, his version of a transvaluation of all values. We can elucidate this by means of hysteria. The hysteric is no longer a consciously moral person who resists urges, but the physical symptoms are conscious, symptoms of the unconscious sense of guilt. We are no longer dealing with a conscious struggle against drives, but with an unconscious will which wants to express itself any way it can. It was thus via the unconscious sense of guilt that Freud came to discuss the superego.¹⁰⁷

6.8 *The Oedipus complex and the superego*

In the third chapter of *The Ego and the Id* Freud discussed the relationship between the ego and the superego. The superego was primarily part of the ego.¹⁰⁸ Freud had in fact already recognized this in his analysis of melancholia where he emphasized the analysis of self-reproach by a critical apparatus in the person acting against the person. A general theory was the result. Objects are libidinally occupied proceeding from the id. When those objects must be given up or are lost they are re-established through identification in the ego. Freud formulated this even more clearly: identification is the precondition under which the id surrenders its objects.¹⁰⁹ The ego forces itself on the id as a love object and only then is the id ready to surrender all kinds of (partial) objects and embrace the ego as a love object. In narcissism the drives are bound for the first time and, as Freud also wrote, sublimated, for the ego is a love object, not an object for direct sexual satisfaction.¹¹⁰

Based on these ideas about narcissism and identification Freud reasoned the existence of the superego. In *Group Psychology* he wrote that primary identification is older than the first object choice. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud did not further comment on what preceded what: identification and object choice existed side by side, but when the sexual desires for the mother become stronger (the perspective here is that of a young boy), the father is experienced as a hindrance. This is how the Oedipus complex came into being: identification with the father takes on a

¹⁰⁶ Idem.

¹⁰⁷ Laplanche and Pontalis have shown that Freud’s elaborations of the unconscious sense of guilt are a crucial step in the thought process towards the concept of superego. J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, p.472.

¹⁰⁸ The superego is primarily regarded as a “grade in the ego”. S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.28. Here we find the reason why the text is called “The Ego and the Id”, and not “The Ego, the Superego and the Id”. The ego includes the superego. On the superego see M. Vansina, *Het super-ego*, chapter 6; A. Lambertino, *Psychoanalyse und Moral bei Freud*, chapter 6.

¹⁰⁹ S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.29.

¹¹⁰ Idem, p.46.

hostile tone and the desire arises to kill him in order to be able to take his place with the mother.¹¹¹

In order to conquer this Oedipus complex, the mother as a sexual object must be given up. Put another way, the child is confronted with the fact that the love for one parent is not exclusively reciprocated. The child must then abandon his Oedipal desires: the Oedipus complex is fundamentally about an “internal impossibility”.¹¹² The (sexual) object choices of the Oedipus complex are surrendered and replaced by identifications. There are two possibilities: the boy identifies with his mother or identifies even more strongly with the father. We have already encountered the notion that a boy can also identify with his mother in the Wolf Man case. We now find material from that case in a new definition of the Oedipus complex. It is not only an ambivalent emotional attitude vis-à-vis the father and mother as first object choices (positive Oedipus complex), it is also (and simultaneously) a feminine attitude as regards the father and a jealous, hostile attitude as regards the mother (negative Oedipus complex).¹¹³ The relationship between these identifications and object choices is individually determined. The outcome is more or less clear: a predominantly positive complex results in heterosexual object choices and a predominantly negative complex in homosexual choices.¹¹⁴ More important than this outcome here is that the “two identifications [with the mother and the father, H.W.] in some way united with each other” are reflected in the ego.¹¹⁵ These identifications set themselves up as the superego as distinct from the other contents of the ego.

These identifications are the enduring results of the Oedipus complex, whereby initial object choices must be surrendered. These identifications form the core of the superego’s commandments and prohibitions. It is from there that Freud could now assert that the superego was a “residue of the earliest object-choices of the id”.¹¹⁶ Yet the superego is simultaneously also a reaction formation against these choices. The reinforced identification resulting from the complete Oedipus complex is now expressed as a superego commandment: “you ought to be like this (like your father)”. Simultaneously, the superego always recalls that the mother as

¹¹¹ Idem, pp.31-32. Laplanche and Pontalis define the Oedipus complex as *ensemble organisé de désirs amoureux et hostiles que l'enfant éprouve à l'égard de ses parents*. J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, p.79. We should also note here that although the Oedipus complex is clearly gaining in importance in Freud’s second topic model, and indeed becomes the “nuclear complex” of psychoanalysis, Freud never provided a systematic outline of the concept. Its function, though, seems to be clear and is twofold: identity formation and drive regulation. In other words, it has a “humanizing” function. Ph. van Haute, P. Verhaeghe, *Voorbij Oedipus? Twee psychoanalytische verhandelingen over het oedipuscomplex*, Uitgeverij Boom, Amsterdam, 2006, pp.13-14, p.60, p.78.

¹¹² S. Freud, *The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex*, SE XIX, p.173.

¹¹³ S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.33.

¹¹⁴ See A. de Block, P. Moyaert, “Freuds theorie van de mannelijke homosexualiteit”, in *Tijdschrift voor Psychoanalyse* 7 (2001/2), pp.64-75.

¹¹⁵ S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.34.

¹¹⁶ Idem.

object choice has been surrendered and will remain so. The boy may not take the father's place with her: "you may not be like this (like your father)".¹¹⁷

This outcome of the Oedipus complex is nothing other than its repression.¹¹⁸ After all, identification with the father as a hindrance to the mother as object choice also means the introjection of that hindrance. The ego is strengthened in its resistance to the pressing id. The superego preserves the father's character: the stronger the Oedipus complex, the stronger its repression and the superego. That superego then dominates as unconscious sense of guilt over the ego, as a "categorical imperative".¹¹⁹ With this definition that the superego – which has arisen via identification – rules as an unconscious sense of guilt, Freud's old question as to the origin of the sense of guilt appears to have been answered: it emanates from identification with parents. This possible conclusion had barely seen the light of day before it was once again questioned by Freud. No, the superego and the unconscious sense of guilt appeared to be even older than the Oedipus complex as they were also related to the id and cultural history.¹²⁰

Freud himself indicated that the attention he was now paying to the higher, moral aspects of humanity was not new. According to him, "the moral and aesthetic trends in the ego" had always been recognized.¹²¹ Indeed, we discovered this in chapter one. It was, however, never his intention to develop a philosophical system in which moral judgements also had a place. Yet only now would Freud give that "higher" aspect a name. It is the superego, "the representative of our relation to our parents". You could say that with this the definition matches that of the ego: the superego should then be nothing more than a representation of a part of the external world within the mind. However, Freud also wanted to claim the opposite: the superego is very near the id to which it is bound by narcissism. It is an "expression of the most powerful impulses and most important libidinal vicissitudes of the id".¹²² In order to support his ideas about the superego, Freud now also included the cultural-historical inheritance whose content determined the superego's commandments and prohibitions.¹²³ Freud sought to link this to *Totem and Taboo* where he speculated about the inheritance of the sense of guilt from the primal sons without degenerating into Jungian teachings regarding the archaic remains in the soul. The superego is not only a strict, individual response to the earliest ties to parents, but repeatedly absorbed into cultural patterns which are somehow mirrored in the id. Given that the id cannot perceive anything, but consists of drives stemming from physical stimulæ and these are seeking a way

¹¹⁷ Idem.

¹¹⁸ On this see Ph. van Haute, "Michel Foucault: de psychoanalyse en de wet", in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 55 (1993/3), pp.449-471 (459-462).

¹¹⁹ S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.35.

¹²⁰ Idem, pp.35ff.

¹²¹ Idem, p.35.

¹²² Idem, p.36.

¹²³ On this see M. Vansina, *Het super-ego*, pp.236-238.

out via the pleasure principle, the idea that there is phylogenetic material locked up within is hardly conceivable. Freud later argued that the child does not identify with the parents (as model), but more precisely with their superegos which in turn are also based on identification. There is thus a chain of identifications that together form a “tradition” of values that have been passed on from generation to generation.¹²⁴ This is certainly a more convincing idea.

Freud did not want to stress this problem too much at that time, as is clear. With the reference to *Totem and Taboo* Freud wanted to establish that the superego not only maintained close ties to the id, but simultaneously represented that which was “higher” in man throughout history. It is the carrier of religiosity, of morality or social feeling.¹²⁵

The point of departure was and remained that of the id which, as a reservoir of life and death drives, was the source of object relations in the form of object choices and identifications. Narcissism and the Oedipus complex are the fundamental determinants of the superego. The reference to *Totem and Taboo* was an attempt to show that the superego was not only meant to be a repressive power against the id, but also that the drives can be cast in a concrete, “ideal” form.¹²⁶ The superego was not only formed externally against the id, it is also the representative of the id. It is the concrete form in which the drives can find satisfaction, the welcome inner norm that defends from being overwhelmed by the id, the safeguard of the individual’s “independence and originality”.

The reference to *Totem and Taboo*, and thus also to the primal father whom he called the *Übermensch*, also made the relationship between the *Übermensch* and the superego more clear. The superego was not only representative of the identification with one’s own father, the construction of the superego also constantly preserved that what was stored in the id: the continued effect of the murder of the *Übermensch*. Freud wrote of a “cross-inheritance” of cultural-historical material within the superego.¹²⁷ In *Totem and Taboo* he specifically meant the sense of guilt which, originating in a primal crime, is capable of affecting thousands of years and surviving in generations who have no knowledge of the deed. Evidently there is continuity in emotional life; Freud now called that emotional life the id and considered it a supra-individual idea.

From this point onward we shall concentrate on the sense of guilt. In *The Ego and the Id* Freud once again redefined that concept as the tension between the ego and the superego. By this Freud meant the “normal, conscious sense of guilt

¹²⁴ S. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, SE XXII, p.67.

¹²⁵ S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.37.

¹²⁶ In fact, this recalls an old notion in Freud’s thought. We have already seen (in chapter 1) that enforced morality could not sufficiently explain unpleasure or the sense of guilt. If the libido were strong enough, morality could be overcome. This old clinical idea is reflected in Freud’s formulations of the origin of the superego.

¹²⁷ Idem, p.37.

(conscience)”.¹²⁸ It is thus actually the sense of guilt which can be defined as “the expression of a condemnation of the ego by its critical agency”.¹²⁹ It is naturally the ego that experiences this condemnation as a sense of guilt. The analyses of obsessional neurotics and melancholics have already demonstrated the severity of this conscience and the power of the sense of guilt. That conscience, the guardian of commandments and prohibitions of the conscience, functions as the superego’s moral censor. The tension between the stimulations of the conscience and the ego’s performance is the “normal, conscious sense of guilt”. This tension is merely a partial explanation for the sense of guilt. Freud’s point, however, was that a great deal of the sense of guilt must be traced back to the id-superego relationship. In fact, the unconscious sense of guilt (that had indicated the unconsciousness of the superego in the first place) was the key to understanding this relationship between superego and id.

6.9 Unconscious sense of guilt

As part of the ego, the superego is rooted in narcissism and as such is also the successor, the residue, of the libidinous occupation of the drives. It is also, by extension, the “heir to the Oedipus complex”.¹³⁰ Further speculation regarding inherited phylogenetic material and supra-individual sense of guilt did not take place. For Freud it was clear that the sense of guilt primarily arose as an effect of the Oedipus complex, that is to say from the first object choices of the id. There was thus a close relationship between the id and superego formation, and the unconscious sense of guilt was the key to understanding this relationship.

In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud tried anew to make the connection to clinical experience and he did so via the so-called “negative therapeutic reaction”.¹³¹ This reaction consists of an exacerbation of complaints and symptoms when the therapist indicates that the treatment has made progress. Something within the patient resists getting better. The need to be sick exceeds the desire to be healthy. Freud called this reaction “a ‘moral’ factor, a sense of guilt, which is finding its satisfaction in the illness and refuses to give up the punishment of suffering”. This unconscious sense of guilt has a special character: after all, it doesn’t make one feel guilty, just sick. “This sense of guilt is dumb” (*stumm*); it only expresses

¹²⁸ Idem, pp.50-51.

¹²⁹ Idem, p.51.

¹³⁰ Idem, p.36, p.48.

¹³¹ Idem, pp.49-50. See J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, pp.388-390. Clinical experience also demonstrated that although Oedipal desires could be reconstructed, they were generally unconscious and remained repressed. The sense of guilt was then clinical proof that there is powerful resistance to certain ideas. In “*A Child is Being Beaten*” Freud reconstructed similar Oedipal desires when he attempted to answer the question of how desire and pain were linked. The sense of guilt was evidently a powerful repressive factor, but simultaneously also an expression of the repressed material.

itself negatively.¹³² It is only with difficulty that this can be made conscious.¹³³ Seen clinically, this unconscious sense of guilt is the best evidence for the close connection between the id and the superego. Incidentally, it is partly also an expression of the tension between the ego and the superego, but here it is clear that the superego knows more about the id than the ego does. Thus it is possible for the superego to pass critical judgment without the ego even knowing about it: normal man is “not only far more immoral than he believes but also far more moral than he knows”.¹³⁴

Freud did not want to approach the unconscious sense of guilt which makes one sick from obsessional neuroses and melancholia, but from the other great neurosis: hysteria.¹³⁵ The hysterical ego represses with all its power every painful apperception the critical superego sends its way. The ego keeps every reference to a sense of guilt at a distance. This repressed sense of guilt builds up unconsciously and can lead to hysteria. This means nothing other than that the ego represses the superego (or part of it) and the id. The word presentations in the superego can be made conscious but the affective charge cannot. It is pushed even further into the id from which it originally came (causing physical complaints through conversion). Here we see the close relationship between the id and the superego applied: the ideas in the superego are internalized externally via identification, but the affective charge stems directly from the id. Put more concretely, we are dealing with the destructive components of the drives which are directed at the ego through the superego. The superego's severity and strictness is derived from the drives. The more severe the criticism, the greater is the sense of guilt, which is either perceived by the ego or repressed with all its strength.¹³⁶

The question remains as to the means by which the ego actually is able to repress. For Freud, the ego could only defend itself or absorb things into itself.

¹³² S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.49. Also, P. Meurs, G. Cluckers, J. Corveleyn, “Freuds ambivalentie-concept (1916-1940), in *Tijdschrift voor Psychoanalyse* 8 (2002/2), pp.93-109 (97-99).

¹³³ It was indeed clear to Freud that therapeutic success was largely dependent upon the analysis of this sense of guilt. If a therapist fell into the trap of being equated with the ego ideal, the chances were quite high that the sense of guilt would only be strengthened.

¹³⁴ *Idem*, p.52. Freud later returned to this problem in 1937 with *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*. The sense of guilt and the need for punishment must be localized in the tension between the ego and the superego, he wrote then, “but this is only the portion of it which is, as it were, psychically bound by the superego and thus becomes recognizable”. In addition, Freud maintained, it must be assumed that part of the sense of guilt is a direct expression of the death drive. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *The Ego and the Id* thus meet: the negative therapeutic reaction presumes a sense of guilt and/or a need for punishment which is partly a direct expression of the death drive and partially an expression of the tension between the ego and the superego whereby the latter “knows” about the most deeply repressed and forbidden desires. S. Freud, *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, *SE XXIII*, pp.242-243.

¹³⁵ S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, pp.51-53.

¹³⁶ This is the first time since the Dora case that Freud discussed the mechanisms involved in hysteria. In fact, the old intuition of the moral character of hysteric patients is repeated here: the stronger the superego, the moral unconsciousness, the stronger the repression.

The ego perceives that which comes at it from the id as a danger which causes it to reflexively retreat into a defensive position. Anxiety is the expression of this. That anxiety, Freud believed, has castration anxiety at its core, that is to say, fear of losing loved ones (the parents).¹³⁷ The ego will always hold onto its narcissistic ideal of being loved as an object. Fear of losing loved ones is the reverse of this. That fear is generally strengthened in neuroses by the sense of guilt. Freud expressed the tension between self-regard and the sense of guilt here in terms of fear: when the sense of guilt becomes stronger, self-regard decreases and fear increases.

In the preceding chapters we have seen how Freud repeatedly sought to chart the human mind via the analysis of the sense of guilt. In *The Ego and the Id* as well, it is ultimately the unconscious sense of guilt that is the key to insight into the close connection between the id and the superego, the two great powers of the mind, in between which the passive ego may have the illusion of control. Where in *Totem and Taboo* Freud saw the sense of guilt as the key to understanding culture and to fathoming the categorical imperative, now individual sense of guilt also became the key to comprehension of the id's amoral drives and the superego's morality.¹³⁸ Yet simultaneously this was also the limit of the analysis, literally, for he had to recognize that an analysis of unconscious sense of guilt was often impossible. After all, its source (the death drive) was "dumb" in a "talking cure". It was thus the final clinical proof of repressed drives which remain repressed.

6.10 *The problem of masochism*

Within the superego the death drives, the destructive components of the drive, are piled up and directed against the ego. Of course Freud had always spoken about a sadistic component to the drive, but it followed from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *The Ego and the Id* that that component was masochistic in nature. The death drive was destructive to the ego and could be converted only later into sadism towards objects.

Freud thus also returned to masochism, which required clarification again. The result was *The Economic Problem of Masochism*. Here he differentiated three forms of masochism: erotogenic, feminine and moral.¹³⁹ The first was "extremely obscure" and also the most fundamental (primary masochism). Here, the death drive was supposed to be the source for pleasure in pain. How the death drive, which is directed at an inorganic condition, can be bound and libidinally occupied is a mystery. That appeared to be paradoxical and he thus presumed that the largest

¹³⁷ Idem, p.57.

¹³⁸ Compare S. Freud, *The Economic Problem of Masochism*, p.167. Freud wrote that the superego can be labelled an individual "categorical imperative". Once again we find here the suggestion (but no more than that) of a link between phylogenesis and ontogenesis.

¹³⁹ Idem, p.161. See also J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, pp.321-232.

part of the death drive is not so bound.¹⁴⁰ No matter how enigmatic this form of masochism may be, Freud recognized its processing in oral fantasies of being eaten, in the sadistic-anal fantasy of being beaten, and in the Oedipal castration complex; the actual death drive remained dumb.¹⁴¹ “Pleasure in pain” also formed the immediate basis for feminine masochism.¹⁴² By this he understood, in fact, masochism in a narrow sense, one in which pleasure in pain is experienced in masochistic fantasies and desires related to others. He paid hardly any attention to this masochism. His attention was – as ours is – focused on the third form: moral masochism.¹⁴³ In other words, he did not focus on the type of masochism that would incite further speculations on the dumb death drive, but instead he concentrated on the type of masochism in which the sense of guilt was the dominant issue.

According to Freud, moral masochism was quite common. The emphasis here thus lay completely on suffering itself; in it the link with sexuality has become looser. Just as in the feminine form, this form of masochism is secondary, that is, sadism is “once more introjected” as regression to its earlier situation.¹⁴⁴ In order to come to grips with this masochism, he returned to clinical experience: an unconscious sense of guilt is the strongest hindrance to getting well. A person does not want to stop being ill. This unconscious sense of guilt wants to be satisfied and that is accomplished through suffering. It wants to be pacified, as we have seen with the Wolf Man. Instead of an unconscious sense of guilt, Freud now wrote of a “need for punishment” (*Strafbedürfnis*).¹⁴⁵ This need must not be confused with the (ordinary) sense of guilt. In an obsessional neurotic’s “excessive morality” the emphasis lies on a heightened sadism of the superego, while in the need for punishment the emphasis is on the ego’s masochism.¹⁴⁶ The latter is thus not characterized by an internalized hate of a parental figure, but here we are dealing with regression. Pleasure is experienced in the pain inflicted on the ego. In the passive position, the masochist identifies with the mother. Here we can think of the Wolf Man who in his masochism sought a sexual relationship with his father. In that case Freud discovered that the Wolf Man also sought mitigation of his feelings of guilt in punishment. That idea is picked up here anew: moral masochism in

¹⁴⁰ S. Freud, *The Economic Problem of Masochism*, p.164. According to Freud this is indeed an assumption, for the life and death drives can never be encountered in a pure form. They are always fused and amalgamated. See also J.-M. Quinodoz, *Reading Freud*, p.214.

¹⁴¹ In 1941 Reik wrote that Freud’s attempt to trace masochism back to the death drive was a long shot that failed to hit its target, but nevertheless also Freud’s best shot. It was after all the only way to explain the obscure origins of masochism. Vice versa however, this “origin” could not explain the exact emergence of primary masochism, namely in the libidinal binding of the death drive. Th. Reik, *Aus Leiden Freuden. Masochismus und Gesellschaft*, Fischer, Frankfurt, 1983, p.45, p.51.

¹⁴² S. Freud, *The Economic Problem of Masochism*, p.162.

¹⁴³ On moral masochism see Th. Reik, *Aus Leiden Freuden*, pp.17-25.

¹⁴⁴ S. Freud, *The Economic Problem of Masochism*, p.162.

¹⁴⁵ Idem, p.166.

¹⁴⁶ Idem, pp.169-170.

fact arises from an emancipation of the sense of guilt which must be salved by punishment.

The moral masochist has a need to be punished which can now be satisfied by the superego (as a substitute for the parents). Although in both obsessional neurotic morality as well as moral masochism we are dealing with a strict superego directed against the ego, these must be differentiated, albeit that this is difficult for two reasons.¹⁴⁷ Firstly, both are (at least partly) expressions of the death drive which is first manifest as primary masochism, then as hate and sadism towards others, then again by regression as secondary masochism. Secondly, the consequences of both an excessive morality and moral masochism are the same: the repression of the drives, which is also demanded by civilization, results in a strengthening of the sense of guilt and of the conscience.

It appears here that this moral masochism can be translated as melancholia. Yet there was a reason why Freud reserved self-reproach for melancholia and the need for punishment for masochism. Melancholia revolves around the loss of a reprehensible love object. The relationship with a specific loved one is here determinative. In moral masochism it does not matter where the punishment comes from. The ego does not need a loved one, nor the loss thereof. For Freud, melancholia is a variant of obsessional neurosis: sadism is directed towards the ego.

Strictly speaking, we must now also differentiate the need for punishment in moral masochism from the unconscious sense of guilt that was discussed in *The Ego and the Id*. The need for punishment in moral masochism can be traced back to the (negative) Oedipal desire to be beaten by one's father and take the mother's place as the father's sexual object – the unconscious sense of guilt that Freud chiefly linked with hysteria in *The Ego and the Id*. That unconscious sense of guilt also seeks satisfaction of a need for punishment, indeed for the Oedipal, hateful desires towards a loved one or for shortcomings regarding a loved one. It is noteworthy that in *A Short Account of Psychoanalysis* Freud referred to Elisabeth von R.'s pain and her (unconscious) sense of guilt which arose at her sister's deathbed on account of her desire to marry her brother-in-law.¹⁴⁸ She repressed this immoral desire powerfully which Freud, in this 1924 retrospective, linked with the Oedipus complex as the primal model of mental conflict. Only now, so many years later, could Freud provide some clarification of the hysteria and the conversion of a mental conflict into physical pain. There is an unconscious sense of guilt which seeks satisfaction through punishment. Elisabeth von R. is a splendid example of this. She suffered unconsciously from desires which were repressed and showed the external world a strong moral character. And yet that moral character was only the external side: her superego accused her unconscious and made her ill.

¹⁴⁷ P. Vandermeersch, *La chair de la passion*, p.234.

¹⁴⁸ S. Freud, *A Short Account of Psychoanalysis*, SE XIX, p.193, pp.196-198.

6.11 Conclusion

At the end of two chapters full of theoretical renovations, yet simultaneously also a strong reprise of earlier ideas, we have seen how the sense of guilt repeatedly appears. The most important reason for this was that the analysis of the sense of guilt brought underlying mental structures and conflicts to light. By analyzing the sense of guilt in obsessional neurosis, melancholia, masochism and hysteria, Freud repeatedly ran into elements of that conflict in their specific constellation, but also in what they shared in common, such as with the Wolf Man. In the wake of these analyses, Freud now also sought to differentiate the sense of guilt: there is an element of self-reproach in melancholia; there is a sense of guilt when the (conscious) conscience conflicts with the ego; there is a need for punishment and there is an unconscious sense of guilt that shows how closely id and superego are related.

It was in his analysis of melancholia that Freud first established a link between self-reproach and identification with a love object based on his ideas on narcissism. Freud subsequently elaborated this identification in *The Ego and the Id* and he linked it firmly to the Oedipus complex, a complex that was for him always linked to the sense of guilt. By concentrating on identification and the Oedipus complex, the various tensions and ambivalent feelings were charted further and the sense of guilt as an expression of that ambivalence was paid more attention than ever before.

For Freud, the sense of guilt in *The Ego and the Id* was the most important gateway to unconscious psychic structures. After all, it was only after this point that Freud made the Oedipus complex the crux of his work. Until *Totem and Taboo*, that complex hardly appeared in his work. His followers regarded it as *the* psychoanalytic paradigm, but Freud was very cautious. Only after he made identification the most important creative alternative to inherited instincts did the Oedipus complex truly become central. Only then could that which was already known be confirmed: the complex was about conflicting desires, ambivalent feelings and the sense of guilt with which they are inextricably linked.

Ever since the seduction theory Freud had been searching for the origin of the sense of guilt. In *The Ego and the Id* he found its most important source: identification with parents and the formation of the superego (which is both heir and repressor of the Oedipus complex and the drives it expresses) locates the source of the normal sense of guilt first of all in the tension between the ego and the superego. Yet Freud immediately asked again: what is the relationship to anxiety and castration anxiety in particular? And what is the relationship with phylogenetic material? Speculations on the “dumb” death drive incited Freud to search beyond the Oedipus complex for a possible source. The sense of guilt is not definitively explained yet and in the next chapter we shall thus see how this issue returned in the subsequent conflict with one of Freud’s followers, Rank.

Chapter 7

Anxiety and helplessness

7.1 Introduction

In 1923 Freud made the sense of guilt central in *The Ego and the Id*. We have seen how for him the sense of guilt was closely related to the outcome of an individually determined Oedipus complex and the formation of a superego via identification with one or both parents. Analyses of various pathological types (melancholia, masochism, obsessive neurosis, hysteria) show that a specific type-dependent sense of guilt is carried over in the Oedipus complex and is largely responsible for colouring and giving form to the pathologies. Whereas a sense of guilt arises when the conscience blames the ego, there is an unconscious, pathogenic sense of guilt when the superego condemns the ego and is simultaneously powerfully repressed by the ego. Moreover, there is a need for punishment in moral masochism that should not be traced back to the superego, but to the ego. And finally, there is also self-reproach in melancholia. Reciprocally, the sense of guilt is also repeatedly the key to achieving therapeutic healing.

These differentiations almost obscure the question Freud was still trying to answer: what is the origin of the sense of guilt? The Oedipus complex, identification and the formation of the superego are the great answers. Yet he still wrestled with the unconscious sense of guilt and masochism, both of which stem from somewhere beyond the Oedipus complex, that is, from the death instinct as a destructive element which works against the construction of the ego. He wrestled with a sense of guilt that could not be explained as the result of a tension between ego and conscience. He also still wrestled with the problem of the working through of the phylogenetic material. Might there not be something like an inherited sense of guilt after all? These are the questions to which the previous chapter led us. To these one more issue can be added, which also came into focus in the period after *The Ego and the Id* appeared: the sense of guilt as a reaction formation against a particular drive. Regarding this final question, it is especially striking that once again Freud occasionally claims masturbation as the source of guilt feelings. For example, in *The Economic Problem of Masochism* he wrote that part of the masochistic need for punishment, such as is expressed in the fantasy of being castrated, for example, can be traced back to infantile masturbation.¹

Several of Freud's students referred to this possibility in order to answer the question as to the origins of guilt feelings, including, for example, Géza Duker in a 1921 *Imago* article on legal guilt. He maintained that the sense of guilt is independent of the relative social value judgements, a phylogenetic inheritance

¹ S. Freud, *The Economic Problem of Masochism*, p.161. These ideas on masturbation as a source for the sense of guilt were not new, of course: recall the masturbating girl with the feeling of guilt (see 1.5).

of humankind.² The sense of guilt for Dukes is thus what was traditionally called original sin. In fact this notion means that criminal behaviour can be traced back to an inherited condition, as was customary in psychology before Freud. In the same edition of *Imago* an article by Carl Müller-Braunschweig appeared on the psychogenesis of morality.³ He referred to Freud when arguing that the feeling of guilt is a reaction formation against primitive drives. Like shame and disgust, the feeling of guilt develops as a form of sensuality in contrast to what he called “eliminatorial drives”. Indeed, the Oedipus complex can also be a source of a feeling of guilt in itself, but in individual development is in fact a secondary processing of initial reaction formations. Müller-Braunschweig sought in the first place to bind the meaning of the Oedipus complex to cultural history, not to individual development.

As regards the origins of the sense of guilt, there is thus a certain lack of clarity. The articles by Dukes and Müller-Braunschweig are expressions of this. It is certainly not amazing that it was at just this moment that Freud once again came into conflict with one of his students with regard to the origin and working through of the sense of guilt in relation to the concept of anxiety. This time it was Otto Rank. In this chapter we shall see how that conflict unfolded. It is known that Freud wrote *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926) as his answer to Rank. In my opinion, his *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) can also partly be seen against this background. This piece also gives voice to an extremely critical position towards religion. It fits in with a series of psychoanalytic studies of religious subjects by students, in particular Oskar Pfister and Theodor Reik, as well as his correspondence with Romain Rolland. I believe that the work can also be seen against the background of rising anti-Semitism and I will explain this idea in this chapter.

7.2 Birth and the feeling of guilt

Otto Rank’s overview of the debate and his break with Freud was published the year of the break itself: 1926. The title of this publication says a great deal: *Sexualität und Schuldgefühl* [Sexuality and the Feeling of Guilt], a collection of articles from the period 1911–1923 which was in fact designed to demonstrate that his ideas had old roots.⁴ The book’s introduction immediately brings us to

² G. Dukes, “Psychoanalytische Gesichtspunkte in der juristischen Auffassung der Schuld”, in *Imago* 7 (1921), pp.225-236.

³ C. Müller-Braunschweig, “Psychoanalytische Gesichtspunkte zur Psychogenese der Moral, insbesondere des moralischen Aktes”, in *Imago* 7 (1921), pp.237-250.

⁴ O. Rank, *Sexualität und Schuldgefühl. Psychoanalytische Studien*, Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna, Zurich, 1926. On Otto Rank, his conflict with Freud and his further intellectual development, see E.J. Lieberman, *Acts of Will. The Life and Work of Otto Rank*, The Free Press, New York, 1985, and also, P.L. Rudnytsky, *The Psychoanalytical Vocation. Rank, Winnicott, and the Legacy of Freud*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1991, pp.31-69.

the questions Freud had raised vis-à-vis the feeling of guilt. Rank writes that the entanglement of sexuality and feelings of guilt characterizes the very essence of the human psyche. Indeed, Freud had also approached this conjunction from various directions, but had yet to explain it. Thus in retrospect, Rank argues that the problem of the sexual sense of guilt is *the* nuclear psychic problem in which, on the one hand, the problem of anxiety ends and, on the other, the essence of social ethical and religious life is rooted. This makes much of the problem clear. For both Rank and Freud the sense of guilt is a central problem that must be explained in order to gain insight into the origin of neuroses and culture (religion and morality). Rank believed that this feeling of guilt must also be elucidated in order to be able to clarify the problem of anxiety. Why is the feeling of guilt a central problem for Rank? Why did he publish this collection in 1926? We must reconstruct the debate in order to answer these questions.

The problem of anxiety is central in every reconstruction of the debate between Freud and Rank. Rank's 1924 *The Trauma of Birth* is indeed crucial, for in it Rank disclosed his ideas on anxiety as fundamental for mental development.⁵ He thought this would accord with Freud's ideas to date as he had said more than once that birth could be viewed as the source of anxiety, that birth itself was the first experience of fear and could serve as model for later feelings of anxiety.⁶ These were the ideas that formed Rank's point of departure and the very core of his book, whereby the core moment in the genesis of culture and the neuroses was shifted from the Oedipus complex to birth. This also increased the importance of the mother's role at the father's expense.

Jones indicated that the tensions among Freud's followers predated Rank's study of the birth trauma – Abraham and Jones had both seen how Rank had estranged himself earlier than had Freud – but for Freud the debate began with the publication of Rank's book.⁷ In a letter in February 1924 Freud explained to his followers what he saw as the problem. For Rank, birth marked the moment when the fantasy of returning to the womb begins and simultaneously fear arises on account of the impossibility of realizing this wish. The problem was now how to understand the role of the prohibition against incest and paternal authority. After all, in *Totem and Taboo* Freud had seen the primal father as *the* obstacle to violating the prohibition against incest.⁸ In other words, Rank questioned the status of the father as “the authority that forbids”. In *Totem and Taboo* anxiety plays a secondary role: of prime importance is the father's prohibition, followed by fear

⁵ O. Rank, *The Trauma of Birth*, Robert Brunner, New York, 1952. Freud obtained the manuscript as early as May 1923.

⁶ S. Freud, *Introductory Lectures, SE XVI*, pp.396-397.

⁷ E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 3*, pp.44-77. Initially Freud did not see any problems: in *The Trauma of Birth* Rank cited his own incidental pronouncements regarding the nature of anxiety from the period when he was working on the birth myths of heroes. He appeared to be a faithful follower.

⁸ S. Freud, K. Abraham, *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue*, pp.344-348.

of his punishment. Yet Freud hoped that Rank's book could be "an interesting contribution" to his own ideas. For the time being he did not want to reject him because he believed Rank still harboured ambivalent feelings towards him. During 1924, under pressure from Abraham and Jones, Freud began to realize that Rank was backing away from the Oedipus complex and all that came with it: sexuality, father, incest prohibition, identification. Relations between Rank and the group around Freud deteriorated further the following year, which ended in dismay for Freud on account of Abraham's death. In the spring of 1926 came the definitive break with Rank.

We may ask ourselves why Freud accentuated his criticism of Rank only gradually. Gay observes that Freud wanted to see a faithful follower in Rank and held onto that illusion for a long time.⁹ I should like to add an important argument to that point: Rank sought to make a connection with Freud's theories and attempted to explain exactly those problems Freud himself was unable to clarify, in particular the origin of the sense of guilt, the working through of phylogenetic material and a new consideration of the influence of the death drive (or in Rank's case, the fear of death/fear of life). Put another way, Rank attempted to anchor the Oedipus complex, which had been so central to *The Ego and the Id*, in pre-Oedipal developments. Freud had originally entertained no suspicions about such a project, quite the contrary.

The Trauma of Birth was not included in his *Sexuality and the Feeling of Guilt* for the latter was designed to present those works which had appeared earlier.¹⁰ An article of importance here had appeared in 1922 ("Perversion and Neuroses") and was now reprinted. Pre-Oedipal masturbation and its repression is the theme. This repression is the result of a feeling of guilt of unknown origin. This feeling of guilt which "can be divided into a biological and a social feeling of guilt" was subsequently "recast as ethical, cultural and aesthetic inhibitions".¹¹ If a surplus of feelings of guilt was not attached – in the Oedipus complex – to all kinds of prohibitions and injunctions generated by the social environment, then neurosis would arise. The Oedipus complex does not mark here the origin of the feeling of guilt, but its attachment. This is a crucial shift away from Freud. Thus Rank wrote here about an innate capacity for feeling guilty or a feeling of guilt which developed extremely early. A denial of the feeling of guilt leads to perversion. This entire construct appears in principle to conflict with Freud's ideas on the feeling of guilt to date. However, we must once again consider that Rank made use of Freud's own vague suggestions regarding a pre-Oedipal sense of guilt.

⁹ P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.472ff.

¹⁰ The book begins with an article from 1912 ("Masturbation and Character Formation"). Here Rank pointed out that infant masturbation was already associated with a certain feeling of guilt, which arose not only via one's upbringing but could also be generated "spontaneously as a mental reaction". Even more important was the anxiety masturbation generated and that this anxiety could manifest itself as a feeling of guilt.

¹¹ *Idem*, p.100.

In my opinion, Rank published this collection of essays on sexuality and the feeling of guilt in order to make clear that the core of the genesis of neuroses (and of culture) was linked with the feeling of guilt. The origin of that feeling was not explained in these articles, but it was clearly linked with pre-Oedipal developments. He also proposed that the problem of anxiety ultimately led to that of the feeling of guilt. A connection between anxiety and the feeling of guilt is thus made, but not explained.

In 1926 Rank showed how his earlier studies of sexuality and feelings of guilt were logically succeeded by *The Trauma of Birth*. In that book, which took its lead from Freud's *The Ego and the Id*, he sought to provide a biological basis for Freud's latest insights. He began with Freud's final remark in *The Ego and the Id* which claimed that the anxiety of conscience can be traced back to castration anxiety (fear of castration), that is to say, to the fear of losing the love of the protecting father. That anxiety is a repetition of the first, great moment of anxiety at birth, namely being parted from the protecting mother.¹² Again, the biological basis is birth. Birth is – and here there is a reference to the Wolf Man – the primal scene. That primal scene is determined by a primal castration: the child is forcibly parted from the mother. This trauma is never experienced consciously, but forms the basis for mental development.¹³ It is the beginning of anxiety, namely the anxiety of being separated from the mother and thus becoming vulnerable and alone. It is also the departure point for a fixation on the mother and a desire for a new fusion with her. We are thus no longer dealing here with Freud's incest prohibition, but with a biologically necessary relinquishment of the mother. Every expression of infantile anxiety is a partial processing of the birth trauma. Every desire and repetition compulsion is conversely aimed at re-experiencing a primal lust: fusion with mother.

It is within this framework that Rank brought up the origins of the feeling of guilt: the desire for the mother evokes the feeling of guilt when the original anxiety associated with the mother's genitals is attached to the father.¹⁴ By this Rank did not mean that the attachment to the father assuaged the feeling of guilt, but that the feeling of guilt is sublimated anxiety by means of projection. This is what he called it when further on in his book, he presented his version of the origin of religion.¹⁵ Here he argued that religions arise from a belief in demons – surrogates for the mother – and a notion of gods developed from it whereby

¹² S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, pp.58-59.

¹³ Thus childhood phobias are manifestations of the primal trauma: fear is linked to an object and the fantasy of being eaten (by an animal or monster) can be traced back to the desire to return to the womb. This is an important idea and Rank extended it to the eating of the totem animal: the totem animal is not a substitute for the murdered father (as in *Totem and Taboo*), but fear of the father is an extension of the fear of the animal. Totemism for Rank is thus an expression of the vital renouncement of the mother. O. Rank, *The Trauma of Birth*, pp.12-13.

¹⁴ Idem, p.19.

¹⁵ Idem, pp.117ff.

the gods are father substitutes. In that development anxiety is sublimated in the feeling of guilt. The feeling of guilt is thus nothing other than anxiety attached to a desexualized object other than the mother. This is also the reason why the feeling of guilt is so tenacious: it is hardly avoidable during one's upbringing and in therapy it is also virtually impossible to abolish. After all, the feeling of guilt is deeply rooted in the primal trauma and the first, liberating processing of it. As with Freud's unconscious sense of guilt and the negative therapeutic reaction, Rank's feeling of guilt points to the deepest powers within the mind and the first protective moves (repression) against them. The same is true of castration anxiety, which is so conspicuously present in the Oedipus complex: its power is derived from the primal trauma. Oedipal castration anxiety is also seen as a processing of birth anxiety. After all, castration anxiety is unrealistic; it is not real, in contrast to birth and separation from the mother, and thus, as a fantasy, it is quite ideal for attaching primal anxiety and perceiving it as a feeling of guilt.¹⁶

We can now understand why Rank saw the feeling of guilt as the central complex of both individual as well as cultural development in 1926. We are dealing with the feeling of guilt as sublimated anxiety, the processing of the unconsciously experienced birth trauma, the biologically necessary repression of the fixation on the mother and the processing of the fear and hate in the Oedipus complex. That complex is thus no longer the main source of the feeling of guilt, but a core moment in its processing. After all, the Oedipal binding to the father replaces the fixation on the mother.

7.3 Castration anxiety and the sense of guilt

In *The Ego and the Id* Freud wrote that the ego can only defend or absorb. Here anxiety is a primitive reaction to danger and the exact origins of the first of such reactions is unclear. However, Freud does write that the anxiety of conscience, the ego's fear of the superego, is rooted in castration anxiety. Ultimately, the ego wants to hold on to the narcissistic ideal of being loved. Castration anxiety is thus fear of losing parental love.

The initial attempts to chart castration anxiety are to be found in the Wolf Man case.¹⁷ It was as an extension of these studies that Freud worked out the castration complex in *The Infantile Genital Organisation*.¹⁸ Here he states that the interest

¹⁶ Idem, p.21. Sublimated anxiety is a feeling of guilt, a sublimation which accompanies a shift from fixation on the mother to being attached to the father. Rank associated the sublimation of anxiety with Freud's ideas on obsessive neurosis. Fixation on the mother can be described as love. The severance of this fixation is biologically necessary (birth) and the defence against the fixation can be described not only in terms of anxiety, but also in terms of hate. That hate is primarily directed at the mother, but can also be attached to siblings or to the father.

¹⁷ S. Freud, *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*, notably chapter VII.

¹⁸ S. Freud, *The Infantile Genital Organisation*, SE XIX, pp.141-145.

of the small child regarding sexuality concentrates on the phallus. The child's object choices are not determined by a given knowledge of the difference between man and woman, but by the presence or absence of male genitalia. We can find a subsequent working out of these ideas in *The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex*. Against the background of Rank's new insights, he now put forward the idea that the Oedipus complex was central to early childhood sexual development.¹⁹ The complex is ruined in a moment when the little girl, who wants her father for herself, is punished by him and feels rejected. Equally, there comes a moment when the little boy, who wants his mother all to himself, realizes that she loves her husband. The Oedipus complex is ruined by the impossibility of exclusively possessing the parent. The castration complex adds a dimension to this destruction of the Oedipus complex. The little boy – Freud did not initially consider girls – wants to take the father's or the mother's place in order to possess the other parent. Identification with the mother (taking the father as love object) leads to the discovery that the little boy must be castrated in order to fulfil this wish. If the object choice is the mother, the father is experienced as an obstacle, which results in the possibility of castration as punishment. In both cases (positive and negative Oedipal complex) a conflict arises between a narcissistic interest in one's own body part and the object choice. Normally narcissism is stronger; object choices are surrendered and replaced by identifications which subsequently form the core of the superego. Freud now felt justified in proposing that the Oedipus complex was ruined by the threat of castration.²⁰ This article ends with the observation that a thorough debate with Rank on this point should take place.²¹

Freud's great answer to Rank is *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*.²² Until that point he had never comprehensively or systematically dealt with anxiety. Actually, until that point anxiety had principally been a symptom of repression.²³ Yet now the relationships begin to topple: a great deal of the sense of guilt that stems from the ruin of the Oedipus complex can be traced back to castration anxiety.

In *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* anxiety is no longer merely a reaction to repression, but quite the reverse: it is a signal of approaching danger.²⁴ Thus anxiety comes before repression. Using this definition – that anxiety warns of danger – he interpreted Little Hans's animal phobia.²⁵ Rather than the phobia being

¹⁹ S. Freud, *The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex*, p.173.

²⁰ Idem, p.177.

²¹ Idem, p.179.

²² P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.484-489; T. Geyer, *Angst als psychische und soziale Realität. Eine Untersuchung über die Angsttheorien Freuds und in der Nachfolge von Freud*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt, 1998, chapter 3.

²³ For example, in *The Interpretation of Dreams* he traced an anxiety dream back to a repressed wish and in the analysis of obsessive neurosis he saw anxiety as a symptom of another affect, in particular the sense of guilt.

²⁴ S. Freud, *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety*, *SE XX*, for example p.150.

²⁵ Idem, pp.106-108, pp.124-126.

a manifestation of an earlier, traumatic experience, Little Hans's fear is interpreted as a reaction to the danger of being bitten. This is an important point because just as had Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, Rank too used Little Hans's animal phobia as analytic material for his ideas in *The Trauma of Birth* regarding the primal history of humankind and the origin of morality and religion. Now that Freud saw this phobia as the expression of fear of danger, he avoided the birth trauma and the mother fixation. Little Hans's fear of animals was to be traced back to his fear of his father. Freud's analysis of the Wolf Man was also tied to this explanation.²⁶ The Wolf Man's fantasy of being eaten also stemmed from his relationship with his father: the Wolf Man's hate towards his father was subsequently turned into a fantasy of his father's revenge which was then further developed into being eaten by wolves. In short, fear as a reaction to danger is here traced back to components of the Oedipus complex. Freud had formulated this somewhat differently: fear of being eaten or bitten replaced the fear of being castrated by the father. The Oedipal desires are thus repressed within the phobia. This is why Freud could write that castration anxiety was the "motive force of the repression" of the Oedipus complex.²⁷ Castration is experienced as a real threat by the little boy. Once again, anxiety here precedes the danger. He makes clear that the danger is real, in fact not only with reference to the Little Hans and Wolf Man cases but also to *Totem and Taboo* and the reality (that which really happened) of the obstructing and subsequently murdered primal father.

The idea that castration anxiety is the motive force behind the repression and ruin of the Oedipus complex is now generalized by Freud: hysteria and obsessive neuroses have their origin here.²⁸ Castration anxiety provides for a defence against Oedipal desires and subsequently leads to the formation of the superego and the creation of ethical and aesthetic formations which have above-average strength in obsessive neuroses. He thus basically says that the sense of guilt of the obsessive neurotic can largely be traced back to castration anxiety. The question now for Freud was whether this Oedipal castration anxiety was the only motive force of the repression.

The first thing he then did was to dismiss the fear of death as a preliminary stage of castration anxiety. Instead, Oedipal castration anxiety and the fear of death were both seen to be expressions of a "reaction to a loss, a separation".²⁹ He subsequently comes very close to Rank's theories: "The first experience of anxiety which an individual goes through is birth, and, objectively speaking, birth is a separation from the mother".³⁰ Birth is considered the point of departure for experiences of anxiety, but not because the separation "is" a castration, but because the separation

²⁶ Idem.

²⁷ Idem, p.108.

²⁸ Idem, pp.119-123.

²⁹ Idem, p.130.

³⁰ Idem.

produces a situation of potential danger. Freud therefore has to consider Rank's attempts in *The Trauma of Birth* to trace phobias directly back to the primal trauma of birth as unsuccessful.³¹ The first problem is that this theory assumes sensory observation and/or experience of birth. That was never clinically demonstrated by either Rank or anyone else.³² What Freud did acknowledge was a "preparedness for anxiety in the infant",³³ something evident directly after birth, which then weakens before subsequently increasing again. This fear manifests itself as a reaction to the absent mother. Both in terms of meeting his needs and satisfying his instincts the child is dependent upon the mother and perceives her absence as a danger. The core of the danger is thus an "economic disturbance caused by an accumulation of amounts of stimulation".³⁴ The infant's first anxiety stems from this danger and thus also precedes the first disturbance. This anxiety is based on both concern for self-preservation and every later anxiety. He called this first anxious situation "mental helplessness", that is to say, the experience of accumulating needs and urges that the child cannot satisfy or get rid of by himself.³⁵ The child is mentally maladapted to life and therefore completely dependent upon help from others. Anxiety is the signal of danger in the sense of a lack or loss of help, help meaning the object (i.e., person) who can satisfy needs. These ideas regarding helplessness are the alternative to Rank's birth trauma.

The castration anxiety which manifest itself in the Oedipal phase can now be seen as a form of "separation anxiety", namely as fear of losing an object (phallus). In this way Freud was also able to immediately distance himself from pre-Oedipal castration anxiety.³⁶ In fact we can say that anxiety is a narcissistic signal that arises whenever the ego is in danger. One might think that by linking the initial anxiety to birth, narcissism would now also be displaced to that moment. However, based on the observation that the first anxiety initiates self-preservation and that one's own sexual organs (phallus) increasingly become the object of libidinous targets

³¹ Idem, p.135.

³² In addition, Rank's theory opened the door to a reduction of all kinds of mental developments and phenomena to a single monistic principle from which inner conflicts emerge, which was always a sensitive point with Freud.

³³ Idem, p.136.

³⁴ Idem, p.137.

³⁵ Idem, p.138. This idea is already presented in *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, when Freud argued that a child is "helpless" not only because it needs others to supply needs, but first of all because the child itself is defenceless against its own primary processes, that is, the autonomous urges and discharges of unpleasure. S. Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, pp.317-318. Compare also S. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures*, pp.87-88. On "mental helplessness" see J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, pp.122-123; T. Geyskens, Ph. van Haute, *Van doodsdrijf tot hechtingstheorie*, pp.42-46.

³⁶ S. Freud, *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety*, pp.142-143. Subsequently, the anxiety of conscience (sense of guilt), which develops out of castration anxiety, is post-Oedipal. Although the anxiety of conscience is impersonal (does not have a clear object), the feared danger here is the loss of love on the part of the superego. This fear can also manifest itself as social anxiety (being shut out from a group) or as being deathly afraid of higher powers (e.g., hell). Idem, pp.139-140.

we can better deduce that Freud stood by his ideas, as laid out in *On Narcissism*, that the ego is a construction and that within narcissism egoistic drives achieve a certain fulfilment.

Freud goes some of the way with Rank's theory about birth as the first formative moment for one's own identity, but his ideas regarding mental helplessness and anxiety in the face of the danger of loss ultimately meant that the Oedipus complex retained its central place in the formation of the individual. *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* thus had no room for speculations regarding a pre-Oedipal sense of guilt, nor was there any discussion of inherited affects. Rank's ideas regarding the fear of living and dying as an alternative to Freud's death instinct are parried by deriving them from the anxiety of conscience. In fact, he defended the Oedipus complex with fervour as a core moment in mental development. That the sense of guilt only came up tangentially during this defence begs the question as to why. After all, we have become accustomed to an explicit connection between the Oedipus complex and the sense of guilt.

In *Sexuality and the Feeling of Guilt* Rank called the feeling of guilt a central complex that deserved clarification. His attention was focused on pre-Oedipal feelings of guilt as a biological reaction formation (to masturbation), and principally on the feeling of guilt as sublimated anxiety related to a desexualized object: the father. A feeling of guilt thus indicates the positive processing of an earlier anxiety. Freud did see this problem for what it was. He thought that the feeling of guilt was closely linked to the Oedipus complex and was still working on the problem of the pre-Oedipal sources of the feeling of guilt.³⁷ Then Rank came along not only with a theory on a topic for which Freud had not yet developed a complete theory but in addition one that diverted attention from what was central to Freud: the ambivalent relation of the child with his father. Hence, Freud felt it necessary to formulate his own theories of helplessness and anxiety, not so much in order to distract attention from the dark terrain of the pre-Oedipal sense of guilt, but chiefly in order to keep his existing ideas safe. *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* must not be seen as a total transformation of his thought, but rather as a new line of approach that allowed an old issue to remain central, and even to be strengthened by a powerful motive such as mental helplessness. This also permitted him to continue to emphasize the significance of the father in contrast to Rank's fixation on the mother. Freud's theory of anxiety also meant that in fact the sense of guilt, without being traced back to anxiety, could remain the core moment in the genesis of neuroses and culture. I believe that after *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* he was searching for a synthesis of his new ideas regarding anxiety and in particular helplessness, and the older theories regarding the drives, the Oedipus complex and the sense of guilt. In *The Future of an Illusion* this is accomplished when Freud argues that "the store of religious ideas includes not

³⁷ Compare Freud's statement from 1927: "We are not yet agreed on the genesis of guilt feelings". S. Freud, E. Jones, *The Complete Correspondence*, p.636.

only wish-fulfilments but important historic recollections”.³⁸ Religion draws its strength from “present” helplessness and the wish for parental care as well as from recollections concerning Oedipal motives and the sense of guilt that impose restrictions. The two constructs are intertwined and strengthen each other.

7.4 Helpless and dissatisfied

The cultural aspect of the helplessness Freud made central in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* was worked out in *The Future of an Illusion*. Seen in this way, this book is to some extent a continuation of Freud’s new perspective in reaction to Rank.

The helplessness of the small child found its way into Freud’s view on culture. Culture, as he now redefines it, consists of two core elements: the repression of drives and directives for mutual relationships between people and the division of goods.³⁹ This calls for prohibitions and regulations which cause privation and frustration and thus dissatisfaction with existing culture. In such a situation would not a Nietzschean universe be preferable? No, in fact Freud declared himself in favour of a culture with which individuals could be satisfied. He considered it necessary that leaders of the people be authoritative examples. Individuals are prepared to conform to a culture as long as the leaders indeed are able to set a trustworthy example to them. This makes it possible for precepts to be internalized into the superego.

Yet the dissatisfaction always remains a latent and ultimately disastrous danger, especially among the lower social classes. If everything goes normally, culture demands not only the renunciation of the drives but also offers substitute satisfactions. Art is one of these, for example, but the most important are religious ideas. Down through the centuries these ideas have helped cultures defend themselves against (human) nature. In fact, religious ideas ensured that a certain satisfaction could be guaranteed: there was, for example, the hope of life after death, solace regarding the tribulations fate could bring and the possibility of reconciliation between men. An individual was otherwise helpless against higher powers such as nature, fate, death and also their fellow man as *Übermensch*. Just like children, these helpless people had in fact every reason to want to surround themselves with security and thus created “the idea of God”, entrusting him with the protection that is needed.⁴⁰ Freud subsequently described a historical development in which religious ideas were changed and adapted over centuries in order to be able to protect people against persistent helplessness. The gods were

³⁸ S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, SE XXI, p.42.

³⁹ Idem, p.10. In fact, this is again in concordance with a Hobbesian contract theory which states that in principle every individual is a rival.

⁴⁰ Idem, p.24.

transformed from the rulers of nature to protectors of morality. But what value did these religious ideas have in 1927? What value do they have in an age in which gods were no longer plausible and, in spite of this and in the face of all reason, religions clung to outmoded ideas?

Helplessness is the motive behind the longing for a protecting father God. The model here is borrowed from the debate with Rank: protection is first sought with and offered by the mother. The father appears to be stronger and is then the next object from which help is sought. This need to defend oneself against helplessness subsequently finds its way into religious ideas, which Freud now defined in extremely limited terms: these ideas are religious “doctrines”, “teachings and assertions”.⁴¹

Thus the theme at hand is that religious ideas have their origin in helplessness. The dogmas and religious systems of thought are embraced because and so long as they provide protection against helplessness. The credibility of these doctrines is based upon three arguments: fidelity to the fathers, passing down of “proofs” via tradition, and the sanctity of the commands and precepts.⁴² Yet primarily, these religious doctrines are “not precipitates of experience or end results of thinking: they are illusions, fulfilments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind”.⁴³ Freud therefore believed that such an illusion is not the same thing as an error: it could coincidentally coincide with reality.

The term illusion is not new in his work. In his 1910 *The Future Prospects of Psychoanalytic Therapy*, he supposed that the enfeeblement of religions actually only created more neuroses: at least, culture demands unabated repression, while the (religious) promise of a future satisfaction of desires had lapsed. Psychoanalysis criticized this repression and with it the “illusion” of high moral standards. In *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* Freud addressed the illusionary belief in moral progress, a strong illusion as it spares from unpleasurable feelings. Associating morality and repression with religious doctrines now made an

⁴¹ Idem, p.25.

⁴² Idem, p.26. It is subsequently rather striking that he chiefly puts it down to the Christian tradition that these three arguments are considered weak and for that reason theologians (and philosophers) have formulated alternative reasons for the espousal of dogma. He names two of these: Tertullian’s *Credo quia absurdum* (I believe because it is absurd) and “as if theology”, which is probably a reference to Pascal. These two schools of thought seek to shirk criticism by searching for an argument that cannot be rationally calculated. Idem, pp.28-29.

⁴³ Idem, p.30. Gay has argued that *The Future of an Illusion* reflects an enlightened approach to religion, Freud standing in the tradition of philosophers such as Voltaire and Feuerbach. Indeed, Freud’s definition of religious doctrines as fulfilments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of humankind strongly resembles Feuerbach’s 1841 depiction of faith in God, immortality and afterlife as wish-fulfilment. L. Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Reclam, Stuttgart, 1994, pp.267-268.

application of the term to religion possible.⁴⁴ However, there were other, more important reasons why Freud called religious doctrines illusions.

7.5 *Illusion and science*

In 1920 Oskar Pfister had published a book dealing with psychoanalytic method, *Zum Kampfum die Psychoanalyse* [The Struggle for Psychoanalysis].⁴⁵ In the final part, “Psychoanalysis and Philosophy of Life”, he wrote that psychoanalysis, as the overall theoretical knowledge gained from its methods (meta-psychology) and as a method to influence the individual psyche, raises the question of its possible connection with a philosophy of life.⁴⁶ Indeed, according to Pfister psychoanalysis does lead into philosophy of life and does have something to say about the nature of what is (metaphysics) or ought to be (ethics). In fact psychoanalysis provides both the ideal method and theory to distinguish between true and illusionary experiences or representations. It thus provides the method and theory for defining the moral and religious personality (as ideal). In this sense, psychoanalysis has much in common with religion: both aim at overcoming inhibitions. Pfister admits that religious orthodoxy and ritualism have often forced a repressive ethics upon people. He also writes that religion is often dominated by an obstinate wish principle. Yet religion at its best and essentially is like philosophy, searching for truth and essence. And even although primitive religion and mythology are coloured by anthropomorphism this search is not “illusory”. Far from it, religion is a “family member of science”.⁴⁷

There are clear indications that Freud saw his text as a critique of Pfister.⁴⁸ In a letter dated October 1927 Freud wrote to Pfister that in a few weeks an essay would appear “which has a great deal to do with you”. He had wanted to write the essay

⁴⁴ There is another text where Freud elaborates on illusion, *Humour*, a short article written in exactly the same period as *The Future of an Illusion*. Here Freud argues that in humour reality is rejected or denied, and instead an illusion (“life as child’s play”) is believed. Contrary to moral and religious illusions, this belief in illusion is highly liberating and elevating. It can thus provide what religion (as a repressive phenomenon) cannot: comfort. This is also the only text where Freud speaks of a gentle superego. S. Freud, *Humour*, SE XXI, pp.161-166.

⁴⁵ On Pfister see E. Nase, *Oskar Pfisters analytische Seelsorge*, De Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 1993. Already in his early pre-psychoanalytic writings, central to Pfister’s writings is a critique of outdated religious doctrines and the search for a theory and method to define and develop an ethics of personality. See also, H. Westerink, *Controversy and Challenge. The Reception of Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalysis in German and Dutch-speaking Theology and Religious Studies*, LIT Verlag, Vienna, Berlin, 2009, chapter 2.

⁴⁶ O. Pfister, *Zum Kampf um die Psychoanalyse*, Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna, Zurich, 1920, pp.246-247. He defines philosophy of life as a grasping theoretical reflection on human experiences, a reflection on ultimate origins, essences and aims of reality.

⁴⁷ Idem, pp.365-367.

⁴⁸ On this issue see W.W. Meissner, *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1984, pp.73-103; P. Gay, *A Godless Jew. Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1987, pp.75ff.

earlier, but postponed it out of consideration for him, until finally the urge was too strong. The essay rejected religion “in any form and however attenuated”.⁴⁹ A week later, again in a letter to Pfister, Freud called his essay, half in jest, a “declaration of war”.⁵⁰ In October 1928 there is again an allusion suggesting that the text was written as a reaction to Pfister: he intended to protect psychoanalysis against “priests”.⁵¹

In my opinion, in *The Future of an Illusion* Freud implicitly takes a distance from Pfister’s ideas on true liberal religion, on metaphysics as a reflection on “experiences” and “thinking”, and thus also on a type of religion associated with truth and moral progress.⁵² If psychoanalysis could provide a theory and a method to distinguish between a religion that is based on illusionary needs, wishes and desires, and one that originated from “true” experience and “healthy” thinking, then psychoanalysis would provide an illusionary belief in moral progress and would be unable to perform its analytical task of unveiling hidden motives such as the sense of guilt in religion.

In *The Future of an Illusion* both historical development as well as an almost intangible dissatisfaction appear to confirm that religious doctrines are outdated illusions.⁵³ And yet “priests” defend doctrine with fervour and maintain that cultural morality cannot exist without God and dogmas. The problem is thus not the “error” of religious ideas, but the fact that they no longer accorded with the times. One hears the echo of Nietzsche when Freud criticizes priests for demanding obedience without offering anything else. In this situation it is better to unmask the doctrines as illusions: their day is over. In a godless world only science can make human helplessness bearable by gaining insight into its origins and consciously choosing the morality of self-control.⁵⁴ Freud then returned to an old analogy: just as children generally go through a neurotic phase which must be overcome in order to become healthy adults, so must secular society leave religious doctrine behind. We see here the analogy between the obsessive neurotic and religion. He refers not only to his own *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices*, but in particular also to Theodor Reik’s *Dogma and Compulsion*.⁵⁵ This is not strange: Freud clearly constructed *The Future of an Illusion* on the basis of Reik’s study⁵⁶, which we shall now briefly examine.

⁴⁹ S. Freud, O. Pfister, *Psychoanalysis and Faith*, pp.109-110.

⁵⁰ Idem, p.120.

⁵¹ Idem, p.126.

⁵² Compare S. Freud, O. Pfister, *Psychoanalysis and Faith*, pp.113-116.

⁵³ S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, chapter VII and following.

⁵⁴ Idem, pp.54-56. Compare J.W. Jones, *Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Religion. Transference and Transcendence*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1991, pp.2-3.

⁵⁵ S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, pp.43-44.

⁵⁶ On this issue see H. Westerink, *Controversy and Challenge*, pp.44-45.

7.6 Dogma and compulsion

Of Jewish background, Theodor Reik published regularly in *Imago* after 1919 and studied religion exclusively from a psychoanalytic perspective, expanding on Freud's findings. *Dogma and Compulsion* (1927) is no exception to this. Its point of departure is the analogy between obsessive neurosis and religious ideas. Reik did not attempt to interpret religious ideas analytically, but sought to cast dogma as the central problem of religious psychology:⁵⁷ what is dogma's place in religion and what powers determine its essence? Belief in dogmas, holding fast to their truths, is not the only characteristic of religions, but it is a prominent one and one which additionally is recognizable in all religions throughout the ages. He wanted to discuss them according to the importance with which the religions themselves presented them: dogmas are formulations of the essence of religion. He subsequently directed his attention completely to Christianity because he saw within it the epitome of dogmatic development.⁵⁸

In *Dogma and Compulsion* Reik dealt with dogmas that had arisen over time (fourth-century councils), generally after serious conflict and debate.⁵⁹ The source of these conflicts lay in Jesus' own attitude: according to Reik he had broken with Judaism and had simultaneously preached obedience to God. The earliest Christians, beginning with Paul, mainly built upon the revolutionary tendencies in Jesus' message and would easily have had Christ replace God. In contrast there was a movement that saw Christ as the incarnation of the father-God. The eventual compromises were codified in dogmas.⁶⁰ Here Reik saw an analogy with obsessive neurosis. The ambivalent relationship between father and son is expressed in the compromise. Yet the ambivalent undercurrent is not easily repressed and the history of the dogma thus evidences the constant return of doubt, a questioning of its validity and its reformulation.

It is of importance in Reik's work that the sense of guilt, which plays a role in the establishment of an obsessive neurotic compromise, also plays a role here in the genesis of dogma. Dogma defends the father-God from rebellion and also

⁵⁷ Th. Reik, *Dogma and Compulsion. Psychoanalytic Studies on Religion and Myths*, International Universities Press, New York, 1951, p.11.

⁵⁸ Reik was building here upon his study *Der eigene und der fremde Gott* (1923), in which he portrayed Christ as the personification of a revolutionary tendency within Judaism: an always latent rebellion against the father-God. This rebellion, the desire to take the father-God's place, led to a sense of guilt among Jesus' followers. That sense of guilt subsequently led to a splitting of the Christ figure whereby the rebellious tendencies were ascribed to Judas. Th. Reik, *Der eigene und der fremde Gott. Zur Psychoanalyse der religiösen Entwicklung*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1972.

⁵⁹ Reik appealed chiefly to Adolf von Harnack, a prominent representative of late nineteenth-century liberal Protestantism, who in his 1886 *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* saw classical, speculative dogmatism as an outmoded tradition and as estranged from its essential, evangelical core. A. von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, 1. Band. Die Entstehung des kirchlichen Dogmas*, Mohr, Tübingen, 1990.

⁶⁰ Reik is especially interested in the dogma of the consubstantiality of Father and Son, Th. Reik, *Dogma and Compulsion*, chapter II.

from the sense of guilt it generates. That defence constitutes a shift: it is not Christ who is guilty of revolting against the Father, but the Jews who are ultimately responsible for the death of God on the Cross. Another defence against guilt can be found in the anxious consciences of believers and therewith the related idea of the last judgement.⁶¹

It was clear to Reik that dogmas were an end product of religion. At the moment doctrine finally appeared to be solid, an inner dynamic called it into question or even rejected it. In 1927 it seemed to Reik that liberal Protestantism – represented by theologians such as Pfister – meant “the end of Christianity”.⁶² It was atheism with a thin layer of belief, or, as Freud put it, it was the religion of deists who “give the name of ‘God’ to some vague abstraction”.⁶³ It was the dawn of dogmatic religion. The question was only which “illusion” would stand in its stead.⁶⁴

Freud built upon *Dogma and Compulsion* and the ideas about religious doctrines, their emergence and decline. Like Reik he considered these doctrines to be “illusions” under which people took cover and he proposed something else for the distant future: science, the primacy of intellect.

7.7 Critique

In general, critique of *The Future of an Illusion* focused on Freud’s “rationalism” and reductionism.⁶⁵ The most important criticism of Freud came from Pfister.⁶⁶ He dealt with the obsessive neurotic nature of religion, arguing that religions were not solely determined by dogmas, obedience to them, or by the abominations (against heretics) which are their product. He argued that Freud’s contrasting of religion with intellect is also incorrect. In fact, in so many words Pfister repeats his position: Protestantism was essentially a pressure-free, individualistic movement, one in which the power of the priests had been broken and in which the laity was permitted to develop. Like Freud he supported a de-dogmatization of religion in order to return to the true essence of the gospel. Consequently he did not see Freud as having launched an annihilating attack upon religion but instead a purification of it.⁶⁷ Insofar as dogmatic religion was an illusion, Pfister also believed it must

⁶¹ Idem, chapter III.

⁶² Idem, p.153.

⁶³ S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p.32.

⁶⁴ Th. Reik, *Dogma and Compulsion*, p.161.

⁶⁵ E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 3, p.650, p.655.

⁶⁶ O. Pfister, “Die Illusion einer Zukunft. Eine freundschaftliche Auseinandersetzung mit Prof. Dr. Sigm. Freud”, in *Imago* 14 (1928), pp.149-184. Often unnoticed and yet significant is the republication of the final chapter of *The Struggle for Psychoanalysis*: O. Pfister, *Psychoanalyse und Weltanschauung*, Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, Vienna, Leipzig, 1928.

⁶⁷ S. Freud, O. Pfister, *Psychoanalysis and Faith*, p.122, p.127.

fade away. Such a purified religion could subsequently enter into a harmonious relationship with science.

In his response, Reik emphasized something else: the primacy of the intellect can only be superficial.⁶⁸ Repressed drives continue their work at the deepest levels and in fact demand an outlet in illusions. In the scientific age people will still pray: “O Lord, give us our daily illusion”. Reik naturally shared the criticism of dogmatism, but he too had not sought to reduce religion in its entirety to illusionary wishes.

Freud himself called *The Future of an Illusion* his “worst book” and “feeble analytically”. Gay has observed that Freud was indeed particularly negative about the text and calls upon personal circumstances to explain this attitude.⁶⁹ Yet, there might have been other reasons for the negativity. As far as the text was a case study for *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety*, the train of thought was clear: helplessness was a powerful motive strengthening Oedipal structures. As far as the text was a refutation of Pfister’s ideas on psychoanalysis and philosophy of life, Freud made very clear that psychoanalysis was “impartial”⁷⁰ and could not be used to distinguish illusionary from true religion. Yet, less convincing was his attempt to add helplessness and longing for a protecting father-God as the “present” motives that strengthen “the historic truth” of religious doctrines. With this he referred to *Totem and Taboo*, the Oedipal conflict and the sense of guilt. Given the fact that in their complexity and differentiations these had become central in the second topic model, the reduction of religious doctrines to a single need and wish hardly does credit to the Oedipal conflict expressed in religion.⁷¹ Here indeed lies a problem. Even although Freud argued that the longing for a protecting father-God is the same as the longing for the admired primal father,⁷² it should be noted that the complex of helplessness, need, wish and care points to another conception of religion and God (as caretaker, protector) than the earlier train of thought in which the father-God was the admired rival and source of frustration, the elevated

⁶⁸ Th. Reik, “Bemerkungen zu Freuds ‘Zukunft einer Illusion’”, in *Imago* 14 (1928), pp.185-198.

⁶⁹ P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.524-525.

⁷⁰ S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p.36.

⁷¹ Compare J. Deigh, “Freud’s later theory of civilization: Changes and implications”, in J. Neu (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Freud*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, pp.287-308 (293-296).

⁷² Idem, p.17, p.24. On Freud’s two approaches to religion – religion as wish-illusion and as aftermath of culpability – see H. Henseler, *Religion – Illusion? Eine psychoanalytische Deutung*, Steidl Verlag, Göttingen, 1995, part I; A. Vergote, “Religion after the Critique of Psychoanalysis”, pp.17-37; J.J. DiCenso, *The Other Freud. Religion, Culture and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, London, New York, 1999, pp.47-49.

brutal *Übermensch* and in which religion processed the sense of guilt.⁷³ Seen from this perspective, Freud's powerful individual motive explaining the persistence of guilt-laden historic recollections in religion actually draws attention away from the historic truth of religion.

7.8 *The apologetics of a godless Jew*

The plea for science in *The Future of an Illusion* and the belief in progress have deep roots in Freud's life and work. We should not forget that Freud began as a Darwinian-oriented laboratory analyst and always pleaded for scientific approaches in psychoanalysis. Freud's never explicit discussion with Nietzsche can also be felt in *The Future of an Illusion*. He considered the world of the *Übermensch* and the renouncement of the suppression of instincts against his plea for a science which contributed to controlling the drives.⁷⁴ For him it was also important that science be able to bridge the differences between religions and peoples. He thus conceived of science as the guardian of a certain moral ideal of humanity, a place from which friendships could begin. Freud wrote this in 1925 for the opening of a Jewish university in Jerusalem. Indeed, he maintained that it was science which might be able to help the Jewish people overcome two thousand years of adversity.⁷⁵

He thus made a link between science, a moral ideal of humanity and Jewish identity. In the background of *The Future of an Illusion*, his plea for science over religion, another factor played an important role: Christian anti-Semitism. As early as the love letters to Martha Bernays he related his experiences of this. Here he wrote of the "plebeians" who had harassed him in the train: for the liberal Freud this was frightening, for the Jewish Freud it was a confrontation with a hostile religion which had treated him with violence in the name of brotherly love. It is certainly true that he had slightly moderated his own judgement of the masses – and of the plebeians – in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* and had not linked outbursts of hate exclusively to religion, yet Christian anti-Semitism is a recurring theme.⁷⁶ Reik had made just this point: Christianity is essentially hostile towards non-Christians, and Jews have a special position in this regard. After all, they are the ones saddled with a historical guilt: the death of the Messiah, or better, the revolt against the father-God.

⁷³ Freud addresses this problem via an imaginary opponent in the text remarking that that the earlier ideas on the origin of religion "appeared in a different light" in comparison to his new ideas on helplessness and human weakness. Freud then argues that *Totem and Taboo* was about explaining the origin of totemism, the animal god and the "most fundamental moral restrictions", and not so much about the origin of religion and the transformation of animal gods into human gods. S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, pp.22-23.

⁷⁴ Idem, chapter I.

⁷⁵ S. Freud, *On the Occasion of the Opening of the Hebrew University*, SE XIX, p.292.

⁷⁶ Compare also S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays*, SE XXIII, pp.90-92; S. Freud, *A Comment on Anti-Semitism*, SE XXIII, pp.291-293.

Freud himself mentions the special position of Jews in a 1923 letter to Romain Rolland. This French writer and Nobel prize winner sought contact with him out of admiration and at this time was deeply involved with the attempts at reconciliation between France and Germany after the First World War. Freud's answer to Rolland's first letter is telling. He valued contact with someone whose name "is linked to a beautiful illusion, namely that of the growth of love between people".⁷⁷ He then makes clear why he wrote of an "illusion": he is a Jew and belongs to that "race" which carries the guilt for the decline of the Habsburg Empire and the loss of the war. This experience jolted him and he was not inclined to believe in illusions. After all, it is a psychoanalytic fact for Freud that hate is easily ignited even over the smallest differences. He thus set this idea against the background of his experiences of anti-Semitism. It is also noteworthy that this experience is linked to his concept of illusion: it was as a Jew that Freud had a good eye for the dark side of culture,⁷⁸ for the most primitive mechanisms which despite all evolution had never been conquered, for the cruel side of Christianity that repeatedly accused the Jews and thus also fed anti-Semitism.

In *The Future of an Illusion* there are details which could lead one to conclude that Freud was always sensitive to anti-Semitism even if no longer in terms of abuse on board a train, then indeed as a threat.⁷⁹ He referred with strong disapproval to the illusion of some nationalists that the Germans had a superior culture. A few times Freud touched on the problem of the zeal for conversion or religious coercion.⁸⁰ It was not for nothing that in 1928 he published a short exposition in which this zeal for conversion was mentioned.⁸¹ As a result of an interview in which Freud's lack of religious faith was central, an American physician wrote to Freud about his religious experience, stating that he had always doubted Christian doctrine until God revealed himself to his soul. Indeed, now Christian doctrine was true for him too. The physician concluded his letter to Freud with the wish that "God will reveal the truth to your soul". Freud's response is remarkable: he published the letter in part, noted that he would probably always remain "an infidel Jew" and then moved on to an analysis of the religious experience. He claimed that the Christian doctrine in which the physician now believed could be traced back to doubt and ambivalence which in turn could be linked to the Oedipus complex. We can formulate this in another way: Freud defended himself against a threatening letter by treating it as a case. He himself states that the letter concentrated on the

⁷⁷ H. Vermorel, M. Vermorel, *Sigmund Freud et Romain Rolland. Correspondance 1923-1936. De la sensation océanique au Trouble du souvenir sur l'Acropole*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1993, p.219.

⁷⁸ In 1925 Freud wrote that his "being put under the ban of the 'compact majority'" laid the foundation "for a certain degree of independence of judgment". S. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, p.9.

⁷⁹ Ph. Rieff, *The Mind of the Moralists*, p.282, P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.447-448.

⁸⁰ S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, pp.30-31, p.32.

⁸¹ S. Freud, *A Religious Experience*, SE XXI, pp.169-172.

wish that he could be converted, but in the analysis he focuses on the conversion of the physician himself as the outcome of Oedipal wishes.

Building upon Reik's work on dogma and the Jewish sense of guilt, it is not strange to suppose that *The Future of an Illusion* could be seen as a first attempt to liberate the problematic Jewish identity from a historical burden. Science reconciles: the unmasking of illusions takes the sting out of anti-Semitic aversion.

We must consider that anti-Semitism was very much alive in Vienna. In the intellectual world there were some who reacted to it very strongly and with prophetic vision. Arnold Schoenberg, for example, had converted to Protestantism in 1898 but rediscovered his Jewish identity in the 1910s and 1920s. In 1923 in a letter to Kandinsky he envisioned violent future outbursts as the result of anti-Semitism.⁸² This intuition determined his work in the subsequent years to an important degree. In 1928 he began writing the libretto for the opera *Moses und Aron*. Here he was dealing with Jewish identity, its survival and principally also its threatened demise. The big problem to which he gave expression was that of central European Jews: should they maintain their own identity, with a Zionist ideal linked to it, or assimilate? That question has deep roots. In Vienna during the age of liberalism (the second half of the nineteenth century) Jews were given opportunities in abundance yet the simultaneous presence of anti-Semitism meant that for many Jews the answer was assimilation.⁸³ This can be seen in the "conversions", such as Schoenberg's, which did not carry an explicit religious character. In the 1920s this problem returned more strongly because many Jews began to realize that assimilation was not an answer to anti-Semitism. The question of Jewish identity became particularly pressing. Schoenberg is one of those who dealt with this problem. His answer was ultimately to return to Judaism (which he did in 1933) and argue for a Jewish state. Here he identified very strongly with Moses, founder of a people with an identity, whom he opposed to Aron, the secular politician who can be associated with assimilation.⁸⁴ Freud too dealt with Moses (see chapter 9), but his Moses would be different from Schoenberg's.

Freud also dealt with this issue: as a "godless Jew"⁸⁵ he was assimilated to the highest degree and yet he was repeatedly reminded of the gulf between himself

⁸² H. Stuckenschmidt, *Schoenberg. Leben. Umwelt. Werk*, Piper, Munich, 1989, p.333.

⁸³ On this issue see S. Beller, *Vienna and the Jews 1867-1938. A Cultural History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989.

⁸⁴ B. Goldstein, *Reinscribing Moses. Heine, Kafka, Freud, and Schoenberg in a European Wilderness*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 1992, pp.137-167. See also S. Heine, "Theodor Herzl – Agnostiker, Politiker, Visionär", in *Theodor Herzl – Agnostiker, Politiker, Visionär, 5. Internationales Theodor Herzl Symposium – Der Bericht*, Vienna, 2004, pp.147-150.

⁸⁵ S. Freud, O. Pfister, *Psychoanalysis and Faith*, p.63.

and others when religious tradition was emphasized.⁸⁶ Science was the podium upon which the differences could be breached. During the course of his life he had developed in this area; that liberal world in which he felt at home. This was the terrain upon which a Jewish identity was not threatened. Moreover, it was psychoanalysis (as a science) that Freud understood as a further stage in the Jewish “advancement in intellectuality” (see chapter 9), which defined the character of the Jewish people. It was this character that through the ages enabled the Jewish people to survive and resist anti-Semitism.⁸⁷

Science is the domain where differences are bridged. Religion, with its outmoded dogmas, repeatedly emphasizes the differences between Jews and Christians and thus feeds anti-Semitism. Psychoanalysis deals with the always problematic identity of individuals and the unmasking of cultural morality. Seen from this angle, *The Future of an Illusion* is as much an attack on religion as a defence of psychoanalysis (and Jewish character). Freud wrote as much in a letter to Pfister.⁸⁸ Science and thus also psychoanalysis must maintain a critical stance towards culture and religion in which people are unjustly stigmatized.

7.9 Considerations

Freud could certainly agree with Reik’s renewed argument that the sense of guilt effects, is defended against, or converted in, religion. Reik had laid heavy emphasis on the feelings which can be associated with the ambivalent relationship between father and son in the genesis of dogmas: love, hate and sense of guilt. The analysis of dogma led not only to this point, but also revealed a problem for the future. Religious doctrine was no longer credible. It could no longer provide answers to the deeper desires, was no longer in tune with life and was increasingly perceived as a yoke. Doctrine had had its time and must now be replaced. Freud agreed with this analysis wholeheartedly. This time he researched neither the genesis of religion nor the origin of religious experience and thinking. His question was rather why people clung to dogma and his answer was: helplessness. People cannot live with fundamental doubts or uncertainties. They prefer knowing themselves to be safe in a religion, even if hardly credible, and even when that religion is violent. Social dissatisfaction indicates that religion has had its time. It is just here that

⁸⁶ In a speech before B’nai B’rith in 1926 he spoke about his Jewishness as a “clear consciousness of inner identity” and “the safe privacy of a common mental construction” that at the same time was difficult to put into words. The least Freud could say was that this identity related to respect for high ethical standards. It was as a Jew that he could take a free and critical place in a Christian society. The dark side of this was that he never felt at home with “the people among whom the Jews live”. S. Freud, *Address to the Society of B’nai B’rith*, SE XX, pp.273-274.

⁸⁷ R.J. Bernstein, *Freud and the Legacy of Moses*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, pp.111-116.

⁸⁸ “I wish to protect analysis from the priests.” S. Freud, O. Pfister, *Psychoanalysis and Faith*, p.126.

psychoanalysis and science have their task in the broadest sense. It is they which will offer a new, realistic certainty. They do not replace helplessness with new illusions, but by knowing the facts, such as in *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*: living life without illusions is a duty.

Does the end of religion also mean the end of the sense of guilt? Certainly not. The sense of guilt can be processed religiously, but the origins of the sense of guilt do not lie in religion itself. The loss of religion should only mean that humankind can remember its deepest Oedipal wishes and the sense of guilt attached to them. In the future such feelings will no longer be punished or forgiven; no Saviour will reconcile them. The sense of guilt can only be recollected and worked through.

Chapter 8

Synthesis and a new debate

8.1 Introduction

Identification with one's parents, the first object choices, the Oedipus complex and the sense of guilt in all its variants were central to Freud's theories on individual development in *The Ego and the Id*. Before that, in *Totem and Taboo*, he had already described the sense of guilt as the core experience in culture. In his debate with Rank he had sought a position which did justice to the problem of those pre-oedipal motivations which had such a strong influence on identity formation. His answer to Rank's birth trauma and castration anxiety is the theory of helplessness as a motif for the first ties to one's parents. It was with this theory that he assessed Rank's ideas, formulated his critique of them, and subsequently reaffirmed the Oedipus complex as central.

It is thus not surprising that after his debate with Rank, Freud further sought to synthesize his ideas on culture with those on the individual. The two works to be examined in this chapter, *Dostoevsky and Parricide* and *Civilization and Its Discontents*, chiefly connect with the theoretical works central to chapters five, six and seven, but also with *Totem and Taboo*. In particular, *Civilization and Its Discontents* has the character of a synthesis¹ and it is in this work that the sense of guilt plays a central role. That does not mean that this book was the answer to every question called forth by the sense of guilt. We shall primarily see the return of set patterns. And Freud will insist more strongly than ever that the sense of guilt is the key to understanding not only the individual and culture, but also the relationship between them.

Although *Civilization and Its Discontents* has the character of a synthesis, it also demonstrates that Freud is once again – or perhaps more accurately, still – engaged in a debate with other psychoanalysts regarding the meaning of the Oedipus complex and the formation of the superego, the conscience and the sense of guilt. The key position he gives to the sense of guilt did not mean that it was no longer the subject of serious discussion. We shall therefore pause to consider the debate he primarily conducted with a new generation of analysts, most of them women.

¹ “*Civilization and Its Discontents* is an indispensable work, unsurpassed for an understanding of Freud's thought and the summation of his experience.” J. Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII. The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*, J.-A. Miller (ed.), Routledge, London, 1992, p.7. “Freud wove together in *Civilization and Its Discontents* the principal strands of his system. The book is a grand summing up of a lifetime's thinking.” P. Gay, *Freud*, p.551. Compare also H. Politzer, *Freud und das Tragische*, W.H. Hemecker (ed.), Edition Gutenberg, Wiener Neustadt, 2003, p.150.

8.2 “The man of fate”

At the request of the publishers of Dostoyevsky’s collected works, Freud began a psychoanalytic study of the Russian and his novel *The Brothers Karamasov* in 1926. This study made slow progress and was only completed in the second half of 1927.² He built upon work done on Dostoyevsky by others, including Stefan Zweig’s book *Drei Meister* [Three Masters] and an article by Jolan Neufeld in *Imago*.³ In addition to Neufeld’s article, Dostoyevsky had been the subject of analytic interest in *Imago* several times. In Leo Kaplan’s article on the tragic hero, for example, characters from his *Crime and Punishment* were exhaustively treated.⁴ He naturally emphasized these two characters’ sense of guilt, need for punishment and desire for forgiveness.

In *Three Masters* Zweig tried to reconstruct the novelist’s character from his work. Rather than a well-rounded view, the reconstruction produced a character sketch. Zweig heavily emphasized Dostoyevsky’s tragic life story and attitude towards life using the description of his appearance and biography to penetrate his character. Zweig saw Dostoyevsky as a person in whom the deepest drives and passions found unbridled expression and were in a constant state of tension. The “good” and the “bad” in him “had to emerge”, his “instincts were unrestrained”. He had no resistance to evil, to what was dangerous. On the contrary, he loved danger as a driving force and worshipped his guilt for the sake of remorse.⁵ But he was also a man who could release his desires in ecstatic delight. Zweig sometimes appeared to be describing an *Übermensch*: Dostoyevsky is a demonic man, a seer, a great frenzy, a man of fate.⁶ The characters in his novels are reflections of that volcanic character who suffers from life. Time and again Zweig described at length the tragedy of the male characters, such as Raskolnikov and the Karamasov brothers, in order to plumb Dostoyevsky’s character. Zweig’s analysis is primarily a portrait of a complex character.

Neufeld’s approach to Dostoyevsky is completely different from Zweig’s. Neufeld is as rational and focused as Zweig is intuitive and verbose. Neufeld fully emphasizes Dostoyevsky’s disturbed relationship with his father, as evidenced by biographical data and reflected in the great novel about the Karamasov brothers and their father. He traces all kinds of neurotic symptoms, including epileptic attacks, back to Dostoyevsky’s hatred of his father and a traumatic Oedipus complex. Feelings of guilt, self-punishment and the desire for reconciliation and forgiveness evidenced by his fictional characters can be similarly understood. This

² E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 3, pp.142-143.

³ S. Zweig, *Drei Meister: Balzac. Dickens. Dostojewski*, Insel Verlag, Leipzig, 1921, pp.89-220; J. Neufeld, *Dostojewski. Skizze zu einer Psychoanalyse*, Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna, Zurich, 1923.

⁴ L. Kaplan, “Der tragische Held und der Verbrecher”, pp.104-116.

⁵ S. Zweig, *Drei Meister*, pp.126-127.

⁶ Idem, p.130.

much is clear to Neufeld: the sense of guilt is completely rooted in the Oedipus complex.⁷ It is this complex that is the paradigm here, the one which explains everything and to which everything can be traced back: Man's fate is his Oedipus complex.⁸

8.3 *An instinctual character*

Freud approached Dostoyevsky's personality from four angles: as a poet, a neurotic, a moralist and a sinner. Dostoyevsky as a moralist seems problematic from the start. Zweig emphasized his volcanic character while Freud thought that morality is based on the renunciation of drive satisfaction. What repeatedly stands out with Dostoyevsky is the lack of this renunciation and the consequent feelings of guilt and penance. Freud moderated his old position on morality: the fact that Dostoyevsky could be called a moralist was not based on drive renunciation or triumph over these drives, but on the struggle against them.⁹

The idea that cultural morality is based less on a strict renunciation of drives, and more on the struggle against them is also touched upon in *The Future of an Illusion*.¹⁰ There he describes the "Russian introspectiveness", a tacit reference to Dostoyevsky as well as to the Wolf Man. By this he means that at a time when religious doctrine and morality had unlimited reign and priests demanded absolute obedience, the Church's teachings were acknowledged outwardly, but not inwardly. In other words, people sinned, paid penance or made a sacrifice and then sinned again. In Russian culture that ultimately led to the internalization of the idea that sin was inevitable, even approved by God; after all, forgiveness followed sin. It was this tolerance of sin that allowed priests to maintain their hold on the masses. The prevailing morality was at its most powerful when it could control the dynamic of sin and penance (sense of guilt).¹¹ This was why Freud could now claim that it was this alternation of sin and sense of guilt that made Dostoyevsky a moralist.

Dostoyevsky as sinner or malefactor is reflected in his selfishness and highly destructive tendencies.¹² This aspect of the writer is very apparent in his fictional characters. The fact that Dostoyevsky could be very affectionate is not inconsistent with this: his destructive drives were chiefly directed against himself, as masochism and a sense of guilt. These two, the sinner and the moralist, do not make Dostoyevsky a neurotic: he always had a more instinctual than inhibited

⁷ J. Neufeld, *Dostoyevski*, pp.37-38.

⁸ Idem, p.66.

⁹ S. Freud, *Dostoyevsky and Parricide*, p.177.

¹⁰ S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, pp.37-38.

¹¹ On this issue see Ph. Rieff, *The Mind of the Moralist*, pp.303-305.

¹² S. Freud, *Dostoyevsky and Parricide*, p.178.

character.¹³ According to Freud, he was a neurotic principally because of his so-called epileptic, but actually hysterical attacks. The essence of such an attack, a “death-like attack”, appears to be an identification with a dead person, or someone one wishes to see dead. That person is generally one’s father.¹⁴

Freud fell back on *Totem and Taboo* and parricide as primal crime. This crime, a death wish in the case of Dostoyevsky, is the primary – though probably not the only – cause of his extraordinary sense of guilt.¹⁵ After all, the relationship between a boy and his father is ambivalent: the sense of guilt appears to be based not only on hate (rivalry), but also on love (as we have seen). The admired father is experienced as the feared castrator. A complicating factor is the negative Oedipus complex (the mother as rival; the father as object), which also makes itself felt, often strengthening the neurosis. Here too we have hate and love for the father, who is both a love object and a castrator. Castration is not only a form of impending punishment, but also the price that must be paid for identifying with the mother and assuming the feminine position vis-à-vis the father.¹⁶

The Oedipus complex means identification with the father (or mother) and the formation of the superego. The ego’s need for punishment is expressed in the tendency to resign oneself to one’s fate and to yield to the superego. The masochistic attitude is thus expressed in a heightened sense of guilt and of submission to fate. The “death-like attacks” should therefore be seen as an identification with the dead father by the masochistic ego, which is “permitted” by the superego as punishment.¹⁷

It was with this in mind that Freud examined *The Brothers Karamasov*. In comparison with *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet*, this novel is the next step in a development already sketched in *The Interpretation of Dreams*: what was open and unconcealed in *Oedipus Rex* is repressed in *Hamlet*. Hamlet is paralyzed by the sense of guilt hidden beneath his doubt. Dostoyevsky’s novel was the next step in the unveiling of the Oedipus complex, with desires and feelings now spread across different people although the ingredients can still be identified.¹⁸

Freud’s analysis of Dostoyevsky ends rather abruptly.¹⁹ It is a brief but important analysis. After all, it is the first case that brings together *The Ego and the Id*, his new theories of masochism and his ideas on the fear of castration. This was not so much thoroughly systematic as tentative. The sense of guilt is once again

¹³ Idem, p.179.

¹⁴ Idem, pp.179ff.

¹⁵ Idem, p.185, pp.188-190.

¹⁶ Idem, pp.183ff.

¹⁷ Idem, p.185.

¹⁸ Idem, pp.188-189. Compare chapter 2.

¹⁹ The final pages of Freud’s essay are dedicated to Dostoyevsky’s gambling addiction, which Freud interpreted as the expression of a tendency to create actual debt based on Oedipal feelings of guilt, as well as to masturbate, which repeatedly invites self-punishment. Idem, pp.193-194.

the key. It is manifested in the tension between the ego and the superego. It is also manifested as self-punishment, as the masochism of the ego. In short, the primary cause of the sense of guilt is the Oedipus complex. Yet three other possibilities are named and briefly explored: the influence of an evolving culture (from primal murder via *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet* to *The Brothers Karamasov*); masochism, which has an earlier origin than hate toward the father; and lastly, masturbation and subsequent self-punishment. Although *Dostoevsky and Parricide* falls short as a complete synthesis of ideas, Freud was clearly once again in search of the obscure sources and effects of the sense of guilt.

8.4 *La sensation religieuse*

The first two chapters of Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* cannot be understood without knowledge of his correspondence with Romain Rolland and the latter's reaction to *The Future of an Illusion*.²⁰ We shall therefore pause here briefly and note that Rolland's critique and views in fact match those of Pfister.

Society and religion came up for discussion between Freud and Rolland from their very first letters. Freud introduced himself as a Jew who – as a Jew – analysed and criticized the culture around him. Rolland was Roman Catholic by birth, was certainly religious, but also anti-clerical and undogmatic.²¹ He was optimistic about the possibility of reconciliation and peace among people. It therefore comes as no surprise that when Rolland first met Freud in 1924 he gave him a copy of his biography of Gandhi. Rolland harboured a deep and abiding interest in Indian religions. Their prevailing tone was one which characterized his own thinking: a religious feeling of connection with the cosmos and with people, as well as a mysticism centred on love. At the same time, he had a deep admiration for Jesus and his wisdom, without embracing the dogma surrounding his person.

It was against this background that Rolland responded in a letter to Freud's *The Future of an Illusion* in December 1927.²² "Your analysis of religion is correct", he wrote, that is to say, inasmuch as religions are dogmatic systems. There is, however, such a thing as a religious sentiment, or better still, a *sensation religieuse*. Rolland was referring to a religious feeling evident in every religion and every religious person. He certainly recognized it in himself, this simple and direct sense of the eternal, which should not be confused with a feeling of immortality, and which he subsequently also labelled an "oceanic feeling". This feeling is religious, and yet completely unconnected with any dogma, doctrine or ecclesiastical institution. It is a directly true, inner experience, which has nothing to do with obedience to

²⁰ H.G. Preuss, *Illusion und Wirklichkeit. An den Grenzen von Religion und Psychoanalyse*, Klett Verlag, Stuttgart, 1971, pp.136-139; P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.544-545.

²¹ H. Vermorel, M. Vermorel, *Sigmund Freud et Romain Rolland*, pp.80ff, pp.102-103, pp.212-213, pp.314ff, pp.447-448.

²² *Idem*, pp.303-304.

authority. It rises up freely from the soul. It is thus chiefly related to an aesthetic experience.

Rolland is writing here about a feeling that belongs to a more mystical or pantheistic tradition. But such a definition of religiosity also ties in with Pfister's thinking which has its roots in the tradition of the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher and his 1799 definition of religion as intuition and feeling for the universe, the infinite.²³ In *The Illusion of a Future* Pfister had also pointed out that religion is more than dogma and coercion. It is an inquiry into the meaning of life, a longing for peace, an urge towards a mystical union with the Absolute. In religion man's inner life is grasped by totality.²⁴ Thus Rolland was not the only one to confront Freud with a religious feeling which demanded clarification.

In July 1929 Freud wrote to Rolland that the latter's description of the oceanic feeling had been troubling him for the past two years and that it would find its way into a new essay dealing with "happiness, culture and the sense of guilt".²⁵ A short time later, he had to admit that mysticism was "foreign" to him.²⁶ We find the reason for this in a letter from January 1930: mysticism called up associations with Jung, from whom he had been "alienated" for many years.²⁷ Yet "foreign" was also the conception of religion presented by Pfister and Rolland with which Freud (as a Jew and as critical observer of his Catholic environment) was unacquainted: religion as essentially unrelated to dogma, repressive morality or intellectuality.²⁸ Moreover in their religious convictions these friends favoured a view of man, an anthropology, in which man was *homo religiosus*, that is, man possessed an innate capacity from which religiosity could emerge.²⁹

Civilization and Its Discontents begins with a direct reference to Rolland's response to *The Future of an Illusion*. Although the latter work contained a fair

²³ F. Schleiermacher, *On Religion. Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, R. Crouter (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, p.22. On Schleiermacher's influence on Pfister see for example E. Nase, *Oskar Pfisters analytische Seelsorge*, pp.98ff; P. Vandermeersch, H. Westerink, *Godsdienstpsychologie in cultuurhistorisch perspectief*, Uitgeverij Boom, Amsterdam, 2007, pp.107-109.

²⁴ O. Pfister, "Die Illusion einer Zukunft", p.181.

²⁵ H. Vermorel, M. Vermorel, *Sigmund Freud et Romain Rolland*, p.308.

²⁶ Idem, p.311.

²⁷ Idem, p.313.

²⁸ "Freud shows how far he is from sharing that sentiment for childhood which unites Christian Orthodoxy with modern Romanticism, old faith with new sensibility." Ph. Rieff, *The Mind of the Moralist*, p.292.

²⁹ According to Freud the oceanic feeling could not be regarded an essential capacity that enables an immediate orientation in the outside world: this outside world is basically foreign to the ego. Instead Freud suggests that the oceanic feeling can be understood through an "embryology of the soul" (H. Vermorel, M. Vermorel, *Sigmund Freud et Romain Rolland*, p.314). This remark is a reference to a text by Ferenczi in which he associates the individual's genital development with the origin and further development of organic life. In his view the most primitive and archaic layer of life (species and individual) can be called embryotic or ichtyic and is characterized by an oceanic state of living in water – man does not descend from ape but from fish. This primal state is expressed in for example religious symbols and in the biblical stories of creation and flood. S. Ferenczi, *Versuch einer Genitaltheorie*, Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna, Zurich, 1924.

assessment of religion, Freud failed to identify the true source of religiosity, that is, religious feeling, a sensation of the eternal, an oceanic feeling. It is impossible to reduce this feeling to dogma; it is purely subjective. In actuality, religions and religious systems of thought do nothing more than channel this feeling. Yet even without such channelling, without these “illusions”, people are religious if they experience the oceanic feeling. He admitted that Rolland presented him with a difficult challenge. He recapitulated Rolland’s oceanic feeling as an all-embracing feeling, a feeling of something limitless and unbounded.³⁰ He felt, based on his knowledge of himself, that this feeling was closely akin to an intellectual perception. This raised the question of whether this feeling – or perception – could be regarded as the original source of all religiosity.³¹

The idea of feeling connected with the Eternal or the All-encompassing sounded strange to Freud because he believed that psychoanalysis had demonstrated that a feeling of self (ego-feeling) versus an external reality was normally a general consciousness. Every ego feels itself to be an autonomous entity, separate from the external world.³² Although there are moments and circumstances – such as being in love – when the boundary can become blurred, it nevertheless remains. It is possible, Freud suggested, that the oceanic feeling stems from a time in the development of an individual when the boundary between the ego and the external world is not yet fixed. “Originally the ego includes everything, later it separates off an external world from itself.”³³ A newborn infant does not distinguish between the ego and the outside world. This distinction only gradually becomes clear as the helpless, yet infinitely narcissistic child becomes dependent on objects from the outside world that fulfil its needs (mother’s breast) on the one hand and tries to separate itself from and cast out every inner source of unpleasure on the other. This gives rise to an external world that can satisfy needs while at the same time be perceived as threatening.³⁴

As we have seen, Freud believed that infancy involved the dialectic of helplessness and need satisfaction (in the sense of alleviating the feeling of helplessness). Religion is a continuation of that satisfaction, which is initially found with one’s mother and then one’s father. Because the world continues to be experienced as threatening, there is a continuing reason for the existence of religiosity. Although Freud sought to trace religion back to early childhood helplessness and subsequently to the need for paternal protection, he felt that the religious oceanic feeling could better be regarded as “the restoration of limitless

³⁰ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.64.

³¹ Idem, p.65. In the light of *Totem and Taboo*, we could also interpret this question as an inquiry into the status of the sense of guilt as the source of religion. In other words, is the oceanic feeling just another source of the sense of guilt?

³² Idem, pp.65-66.

³³ Idem, p.68.

³⁴ Idem, pp.66f.

narcissism”.³⁵ This oceanic feeling was not linked to religion until a later stage of development.

The oceanic feeling continued to be strange and difficult to fathom for Freud. At the end of the first chapter of *Civilization and Its Discontents* he referred to the ideas of “another friend” who, if it was not Jung, certainly represented a Jungian perspective. A religious feeling, an oceanic feeling, can be seen as a regression to primal conditions of the mind, archaic layers which are innate or inherited and which serve as a breeding ground for mysticism. Yet Freud takes another view, quoting Friedrich Schiller: ...*Es freue sich, wer da admet im rosigten Licht.*³⁶ With this quote, Freud takes this religious opinion for what it is – a comforting and narcissistic illusion.

8.5 Impossible happiness

Freud’s response to the question raised by Rolland automatically brought him to the theme he had raised in *The Future of an Illusion*: religion was not the expression of religious feeling, but a set of dogmas that answer life’s big questions and promise to fulfil in the afterlife all that is not possible in the here and now.

Life, according to Freud, is made up of pain and disillusionment, but there are various ways to make it bearable.³⁷ Science offers one such possibility; it can distract from life’s difficulties by developing technologies to make life more pleasant. But even ordinary diversions can distract us from our troubles. Another possibility is the search for alternative means of satisfaction. He was referring here to art as a possible form of sublimation. Another way of making our troubles bearable is to seek satisfaction through drink or drugs. Religion belongs to none of these categories; it can barely alleviate the difficulties of life through distractions and substitute sources of satisfaction. What is especially typical of religion is its doctrinal explanation of the world and the promise of the future need satisfaction. Freud now summarized this in the idea of the purpose of life.³⁸ This was something religion *did* have to offer.

Yet what does psychoanalysis have to say about the purpose of life? The answer seems clear – happiness. There are two aspects to the focus on happiness: striving for the absence of pain and displeasure, and striving to experience pleasure. He thus derived the answer from the (un)pleasure principle which he had perceived as fundamental from the very beginning of psychoanalysis. As early as his analysis of *Carmen* and his study of hysteria, it was clear to him that an individual is focused on the avoidance of displeasure and strives to experience pleasure, although this is

³⁵ Idem, p.72.

³⁶ Idem, p.73.

³⁷ Idem, p.75.

³⁸ Idem, p.76.

impeded in every possible way. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* he principally reached back to *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning*, a short article in which he argued that, in its original narcissistic condition, a child takes no account of a reality outside itself, but is forced to do so in order to satisfy needs. A certain mastery of reality, achieved by thinking, fantasizing and remembering, is needed to produce that satisfaction (the reality principle). In fact, Freud had been optimistic at that time: a certain mastery of reality offers the possibility of drive satisfaction and thus of “happiness”.³⁹

In *Civilization and Its Discontents* the tone is different. Lasting happiness is an impossible goal. Freud referred with his customary irony to religion when commenting that the Creator’s plan is in conflict with the idea that people are meant to be happy.⁴⁰ People are first and foremost governed by their avoidance of unpleasure and protection against helplessness: enduring happiness is certainly desired, but is impossible for two reasons. The first is linked to the nature of the pleasure principle, which is geared to the immediate and thus episodic need satisfaction. A permanent state of satisfaction would produce neither pleasure nor happiness, only contentment (*Behagen*). Secondly, outside influences do not appear to permit lasting happiness in life. Suffering is always lying in wait: in our own bodies through illness and old age, in the natural world with its unrelenting devastation, and in our relations with others.⁴¹ We can understand this reality, but cannot bend it to our will. Both the reality and pleasure principles fail in their intention to make us happy and we suffer as a result. Precious few succeed in sublimation through art and science, which can make us happy, provided that physical suffering does not throw a spanner in the works. We are left with the general principle that happiness is thwarted, which in turn produces unpleasure again. An example of this is love. Many people find happiness through love, satisfying their desires through loving and being loved. But Freud is quick to point out the drawbacks: loss of a loved one causes great sorrow. At no other time are we “so helplessly unhappy”.⁴² Another possibility for happiness is the enjoyment of beauty. Yet even an aesthetic attitude to life is no guarantee against suffering.

Becoming happy is unachievable as a goal, yet cannot be abandoned. According to Freud, this is the greatest problem with religion. Religion prescribes a purpose for life which is the same for everyone and which is forced upon everyone in the same way. If religion matches an individual’s constitution, it may sometimes make that person happy. Religion may also save some individuals from neuroses (Freud had argued this earlier in *The Future Chances of Psychoanalytic Therapy*). Yet usually the believer is obliged to find paltry solace through submission to onerous commands and dogmas.⁴³

³⁹ See 4.3.

⁴⁰ *Idem*, p.76.

⁴¹ *Idem*, p.77.

⁴² *Idem*, p.82.

⁴³ *Idem*, pp.84-85.

Freud's analysis of human happiness and unhappiness is based on a reinterpretation of the pleasure and reality principles, but more is going on in the background. The fact that he was now writing about happiness cannot be derived from the pleasure principle, which is about satisfying drives and alleviating tension, not about "happiness". From the clinical material he had gathered and charted, we could indeed conclude that individuals are focused on happiness. However, it must be added that this happiness takes all manner of guises, even unhappiness or pain. The masochist, who experiences a certain desire for pain and need for punishment, finds happiness in pain and punishment. The compulsive neurotic experiences a certain pleasure in submitting to an extremely powerful superego, preferring restriction to being overwhelmed by drives. Hysterics can "contaminate" one another, which is only conceivable if happiness is to be found in displaying hysterical symptoms. The First World War had in fact confirmed this as a general principle. People are not only oriented towards good, their own advantage or the happiness of the majority; sometimes the evil in people manifests itself in extreme cruelty. Moreover, after the war, traumatized soldiers evidenced a repetition compulsion to experience the unbearable trauma anew. If the pleasure principle can be linked to happiness, these must be many peculiar forms of happiness.

The reference to happiness is therefore part of another tradition, which Freud merely touched upon when he wrote that the question about the purpose of life – and the answer "happiness" – had been posed and answered countless times.⁴⁴ Proceeding from this analysis of happiness, *Civilization and Its Discontents* developed into a book about cultural morality, the fate of the individual within that morality and the sense of guilt. It is precisely there, in the thinking about morality, that we encounter a tradition of talking about happiness. We can therefore read his analysis of the impossibility of happiness as the real introduction to this book.

What position does Freud occupy in the long tradition of thinking and talking about happiness? To a certain extent he is part of a discussion with, and makes references to, ethical positions. This does not make him an ethicist. He never set out to develop an ethical theory. For him, ethics as a system of commands and prohibitions was something to criticize if it was too rigid. He can, however, be called a moralist.⁴⁵ For example, Freud's critical "*Civilized*" *Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness* ended with concrete proposals for the liberalization of sexual morality and *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* concluded that it is our duty to bear life and death.⁴⁶ *Dostoevski and Parricide* with its claim that "the moral conduct of life is a practical human interest"⁴⁷ and *Civilization and*

⁴⁴ Idem, p.75.

⁴⁵ Ph. Rieff, *The Mind of the Moralist*. Compare also H. Politzer, *Freud und das Tragische*, pp.146ff.

⁴⁶ See 3.6 and 5.2.

⁴⁷ S. Freud, *Dostoevski and Parricide*, p.177.

Its Discontents with its plea for drive renunciation in civilization fits this row. Yet to be called a moralist was something Freud tried to avoid. That evening in 1908 when Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* was being discussed, Freud declared that there was one thing in particular about Nietzsche that irritated him: the fact that he ultimately transformed his analyses into an imperative. In so doing, Nietzsche alienated himself once and for all from a strictly scientific approach and revealed himself to be a "moralist" and "theologian".⁴⁸ Freud wanted to avoid what he saw as the essence of ethics (and religion): the laying down of prescriptions and rules. Yet in *Civilization and Its Discontents* and in the new introductory lectures he gave at this time, we see him adopting a position with regard to ethics.

Freud certainly did not mention the pleasure principle in order to provide a natural, psychological, and perhaps biological basis for a utilitarian position. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* the question is not: how can we realize as much happiness as possible? The chief question is: why is it that people are so unhappy?⁴⁹ In other words, why do people deny themselves happiness? In fact, the question is a reversal of the starting point adopted by utilitarian ethicists such as Jeremy Bentham or John Stuart Mill. In their views people are governed by two principles: pain and pleasure.⁵⁰ In short, people seek to avoid pain and search for pleasure in the form of happiness. Bentham therefore deduced that the avoidance of pain and the striving for happiness is also desirable. On the whole, Freud proceeds from a reverse position: happiness is desirable, but is not desired. There is something that stops people from striving, in a calculated and rational way, for happiness, or for what will bring the greatest happiness.⁵¹

With this pessimistic pronouncement Freud adopts a similar position to Schopenhauer, although we shall see that *Civilization and Its Discontents* is not just a pessimistic book. We know that Freud, challenged to do so by Jung, had incorporated Schopenhauer into his thinking during his *Totem and Taboo* period. Other followers had also encouraged this. In the period around the writing of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Schopenhauer's name appears once again. In a lecture, Freud explicitly refers once again to similarities between them.⁵² Although Schopenhauer's name is not mentioned in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, there are nevertheless important parallels, especially with chapters 46 and 47 of the

⁴⁸ H. Nunberg, E. Federn (eds.), *Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, Vol. 2*, p.56.

⁴⁹ To Max Eitingon Freud wrote: "My work could perhaps be called if it needs a title at all: Unhappiness in Culture". P. Gay, *Freud*, p.544.

⁵⁰ Freud knew John Stuart Mill since he translated his *The Subjection of Women* (see 1.2). The founding father of utilitarianism is Bentham with his 1789 *Introduction of the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. J. Bentham, *An Introduction of the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, J.H. Burns, H.L.A. Hart (eds.), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996.

⁵¹ Compare: "It really seems as though it is necessary for us to destroy some other thing or person in order not to destroy ourselves, in order to guard against the impulsion to self-destruction. A sad disclosure indeed for the moralist!" S. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures*, p.105.

⁵² *Idem*, p.107.

second volume of *The World as Will and Representation*.⁵³ We recognize Freud's central themes in these chapters of *The World as Will and Representation*, with their emphasis on the impossibility of happiness (the negativity of all happiness), the fact of pain (positivity of pain) and the tragic idea that satisfaction is unattainable because our will always wants more than what is possible. We also find the idea that people are threatened by danger on all sides – nature's cruelty, physical decline or the cruelty people show one another – and that their relationships with others are always governed by guilt. Schopenhauer also emphasized the renunciation of drives and the need to submit to a moral code. The greatest difference appears to be that Schopenhauer embraced religion (in a mystical, pantheistic sense) because it seemed to offer a connectedness with all people and the surrender of selfishness.⁵⁴ Freud could not accept this view and we must not conclude that he agreed with Schopenhauer on everything. Although *Civilization and Its Discontents* bears the mark of Schopenhauer, Freud used his ideas selectively to reinforce his own. We see this clearly in the lecture from his new series when he emphasized not just the similarities, but also the differences between his own ideas and Schopenhauer's in a critique reminiscent of *Totem and Taboo*. Schopenhauer was right when he differentiated between the death and life drives but wrong when he claimed that they were directed toward a single goal. Death is not the only purpose of life; life is itself a purpose. Here Freud emphasized the uncertain battle between drives and the ambivalence of feelings.⁵⁵

According to Freud, the life of individuals and society as a whole attest to the same rule: the pleasure principle is directed towards happiness, but people are unhappy under the yoke of a personal and cultural morality which go hand in hand. *Civilization and Its Discontents* did not ask about the origins of cultural morality, as in *Totem and Taboo*. Instead it asked how that morality – or Kant's categorical imperative in all of its forms⁵⁶ – managed to survive and will continue to do so.

Freud's concern was with the source of suffering: how people deal with one another and the organization of society to regulate this. We can do nothing but accept our own physical ailments and the dangers of the natural, external world. If we do so, these factors need not stand in the way of possible happiness.⁵⁷ Freud

⁵³ References to Hobbes' adage that man is a wolf to man (*homo homini lupus*), to Voltaire's *Candide* and to specific citations from Goethe's *Faust*, indicate that these two chapters found their way into *Civilization and Its Discontents*. A. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Volume 2, chapter 46 and 47. See also P.-L. Assoun, *Freud, la philosophie et les philosophes*, pp.200ff; P. Gay, *Freud*, p.546.

⁵⁴ Notably, A. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Volume 2, chapter 48.

⁵⁵ S. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures*, p.107. Also, A. Lambertino, *Psychoanalyse und Moral bei Freud*, p.121.

⁵⁶ S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.35, p.48; S. Freud, *The Economic Problem of Masochism*, p.167.

⁵⁷ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.86.

focused completely on the relationship between the individual, fellow human beings and civilization/culture.⁵⁸

In *Totem and Taboo* Freud had sought the origins of cultural morality, emphasizing the fact that morality, religion and social institutions are in a sense directed against “unhappiness”. Morality, religion and social institutions regulate interpersonal (sexual) relationships in such a way as to restrain and channel the destructive forces in people. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* he articulated this anew: culture consists of everything which people use to protect themselves against threats from various kinds of suffering. Yet this same culture is also the source of unhappiness; because of its exacting nature, it places so much pressure on people that it makes them unhappy.⁵⁹ He went on to analyse this tension in the course of his discussion. In my opinion, this makes the book a direct continuation of *Totem and Taboo*.⁶⁰ Freud had touched upon the problem of dissatisfaction with the prevailing culture in *The Future of an Illusion*. *Civilization and Its Discontents* is thus ultimately a synthesis of his thinking on cultural morality and hence on religion.

If this culture is so oppressive, would not a return to a primitive form of culture be desirable? Freud proposed the idea⁶¹, which brings us to Nietzsche, for it was in primitive man, the primal father, that Freud recognized the *Übermensch*. In fact, in many places his analysis of cultural unhappiness appears to have been inspired by Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*.⁶² Nietzsche’s analysis of cultural history repeatedly expressed the idea that people had turned against their deepest instincts. Self-imposed limitations, which Nietzsche called “bad conscience”, were supported by culture as a whole. Borne by “priests”, civilization demands of its subjects the self-imposed repression of drives. Freud was also critical of a repressive culture, but defended civilization and the restriction of the “possibilities of satisfaction”. “The liberty of the individual is no gift of civilization”.⁶³ In order to prevent the emergence of “evil”, people’s selfishness had to be restrained to a certain degree by a sense of guilt, as we shall see.

⁵⁸ “The word civilization describes the whole sum of the achievements and the regulations which distinguish our lives from those of our animal ancestors and which serves two purposes – namely to protect men against nature and to adjust their mutual relations.” Idem, p.89. In *The Future of an Illusion* Freud had argued that there was no distinction between culture and civilization. S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p.6. Both words, culture and civilization, are translations of the German word *Kultur*, a word generally conveyed by Freud. Freud only scarcely uses the word *Zivilisation*. On this issue see J.-M. Quinodoz, *Reading Freud*, p.236.

⁵⁹ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, chapter 3 and 4.

⁶⁰ Freud makes this claim himself in chapter 4 of *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Also, P. Gay, *Freud*, p.547.

⁶¹ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.86.

⁶² R. Lehrer, *Nietzsche’s Presence in Freud’s Life and Thought*, pp.178-183.

⁶³ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.95.

8.6 *Hostility to civilization*

Freud now focused fully on the relationship between individual and civilization (culture) as the source of unhappiness, or discontentment. He defined the term civilization as “the whole sum of the achievements and the regulations which distinguish our lives from those of our animal ancestors and which serve two purposes – namely to protect men against nature and to adjust their mutual relations”.⁶⁴ From the individual’s perspective, civilization is a necessary evil. To be sure, it offers a host of possibilities for mitigating unhappiness. The technology to conquer nature’s hardships, the medicines to treat illness, and even the intoxicants that help us forget our sufferings are all cultural products. Yet above all civilization is the sum total of human institutions and rules governing interpersonal relationships in order to control the destructive power of individual drives. In short, people are like wolves to one another⁶⁵ and society is a necessary form of social contract. “This replacement of the power of the individual by the power of a community constitutes the decisive step of civilization.”⁶⁶ The tension between individual desires and social demands is thus fundamental. Individual freedom is certainly not a cultural good.⁶⁷ Cultural development means increased restrictions on individuals. Yet the drive for freedom is also human and is an important breeding ground for hostility to civilization. This tension is paramount and Freud offers a glimpse of his book’s conclusion: humanity’s challenge is to find a compromise between the individual drive for freedom and culture’s enormous demands.

Freud mentions several historical moments when this hostility to civilization manifested itself and is still evident: the triumph of Christendom over pagan religions, the hostility of colonial Europeans towards primitive peoples and, finally, modern neuroses in a demanding society.⁶⁸ These three phenomena are examples of moments when a superior civilization imposed itself upon another and demanded the renunciation of drives. This demand sowed the seeds of discontent and is certainly evident in the growth of modern neuroses (here he seems to be referring chiefly to the late nineteenth-century period of nervousness and neurasthenia). In fact, the neurotic’s complains and symptoms are a protest against a culture which promised happiness but brought unhappiness.⁶⁹

Although there have indeed been enormous technological advances, so much so that ideals can be realized today that were once reserved to the gods, all this

⁶⁴ Idem, p.89.

⁶⁵ Idem, p.111.

⁶⁶ Idem, p.95.

⁶⁷ Idem.

⁶⁸ Idem, p.87.

⁶⁹ Compare J. Breuer, S. Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, p.305. Here, Freud wrote that psychoanalytic therapy (cure) aimed at the transformation “of hysteric misery into common unhappiness”.

does not make us happy. While such progress may sometimes be useful and of benefit to the individual, utility and benefit are fundamentally not characteristics of civilization. A characteristic of culture is instead the high value placed on higher mental achievements such as philosophy and religious ideas and ideals.⁷⁰

These latter reflections lead us to another point: in addition to hostility to civilization there is also a certain familiarity with it. Freud pointed out the analogy between individual and cultural development.⁷¹ Order and cleanliness are not only imposed upon individuals by culture, but are also expressed in individual development. The appreciation of higher achievements in science, art, religion and philosophy are analogous to the sublimation of drives towards a non-sexual aim.⁷² Drive sublimation is expressed in both individual lives and in cultural development, but the most important analogy in Freud's view lies in repression, which he made the basis of his psychoanalysis. Culture too demands repression of an individual's drives.

Freud is back on familiar territory: the analogy between individual and cultural development, between individual and cultural character. He had explored this terrain in *Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices* and subsequently extended the analogy in *Totem and Taboo*. In his argument, he now returned to this latter work.⁷³ He also recounted the history of the primal family in which the primal father, capriciously and wholeheartedly, held sway over his economic and sexual possessions, namely women. The sons then organized themselves into a group, because there was strength in numbers – primitive man soon discovered the necessity of working together to improve his lot (Ananke)⁷⁴ – and get rid of the father. The most primitive culture (totemism) was based on the restrictions the sons had to impose upon themselves in order to form a horde. The advantage was that such a community was more successful in controlling dangers from the outside world. As we know, taboos were the first laws introduced out of a sense of guilt in order to prohibit patricide and incest.

It was in the primal family that Freud found the origin of the analogy between individuals and culture. Primitive culture was able to develop once the primal sons prohibited themselves from satisfying their sexual drives (the desire for incest) and preserved their love for their father by identifying with him. This genital love for the first love object (mother) and identification (in short, the Oedipus complex) are not only fundamental to the development of each individual character, but are

⁷⁰ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pp.93-94.

⁷¹ *Idem*, p.96.

⁷² *Idem*, p.97. Again, Freud fails to provide a thorough theory of sublimation despite its key role in the relationship between individual mental life and culture/civilization.

⁷³ *Idem*, pp.100ff.

⁷⁴ *Idem*, p.99, p.101.

also the basis of civilization.⁷⁵ The satisfaction of sexual drives in both individuals and culture is the basic model for every later satisfaction in the form of being happy. He had argued earlier that freeing oneself from the first love objects is the task of every individual. Self-love must be conquered through a libidinous bond with others. The bond with one's mother must be overcome in order to achieve an independent identity. Even being in love with a single person is problematic because it entails an impoverishment of the ego. Freud now refers to the dependency on a chosen love-object as the "most dangerous way" of being exposed to suffering (through loss).⁷⁶ At the other end of the spectrum we find those few individuals who no longer bind their love to one or two people, but transform it into a general love for their fellow humans or even the entire world. There are also drawbacks to this extreme: the love for the object is less valuable in this general kind of love, and not everyone is equally worthy of being loved.⁷⁷

The renunciation of immediate sexual satisfaction is the basis for creating mutual bonds of affection within a group (*Totem and Taboo, Group Psychology*). It is the sexual drives which shape the first object relations and hence family relationships, friendships and the love of civilization.⁷⁸ The latter naturally comes under pressure when civilization makes severe demands. This is unavoidable because civilization demands an increasingly far-reaching regulation of social ties. This also means a strengthening of relationships within the family, which in turn means that families do not release their children into the outside world. In that sense the increasing regulation of social ties is counterproductive. The fact that civilization is largely borne by men and that families are the domain of women can further sharpen this contradistinction, thereby fuelling the hostility to civilization. In short, civilization's precepts give rise to a hostility towards civilization.

That hostility is strengthened by prohibitions.⁷⁹ The first prohibitions targeted the renunciation of sexual satisfaction (the incest taboo). The curtailment and regulation of sexual drives is most advanced in Western society: Freud repeated the

⁷⁵ Both object love and identification are referred to here as "the power of love", Eros, as one of the two parents of civilization. The other is Ananke. This word was first used in *The Future of an Illusion*, paired with "Logos". The words "Logos and Ananke" were a reference to the Dutch novelist Multatuli. S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, pp.53-54. The Dutch novelist Multatuli (Eduard Douwes Dekker) had used the formula "Logos and Ananke" in his writings. Freud was in possession of those writings by Multatuli's that had been translated into German by the turn of the century. As early as 1907 he mentioned Multatuli's *Letters* and *Ideas* as one of the best literary works and called Multatuli "that great thinker and humanitarian". S. Freud, *The Sexual Enlightenment of Children, SE IX*, p.132. In the 1920s, he restated his admiration on several occasions. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* the Multatuli formula is the inspiration for his formula "Eros and Ananke". P. Brückner, "Sigmund Freuds Privatlektüre", in *Psyche. Eine Zeitschrift für psychologische und medizinische Menschenkunde* 16 (1962), pp.721-743; T. Bonhoeffer, "Multatuli", in *Wege zum Menschen* 22 (1970), pp.365-369.

⁷⁶ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.101.

⁷⁷ Idem, p.102.

⁷⁸ Idem, p.103.

⁷⁹ Idem, pp.104ff.

criticism of sexual morality he had set out in *Three Essays* and “Civilized” *Sexual Morality*. Society interferes too much in people’s sexual constitution by presenting as the norm only the fiction of a normal sexual relationship (heterosexuality within a monogamous marriage). In so doing, culture denies happiness to many, which brings us back to hostility to civilization.

8.7 *Loving thy neighbour*

The collision between sexuality and culture is inherent in the simple fact that even normal sexual relationships are confined to two people who, because they are in love, show no interest in the outside world and who have all they need to make them happy, whereas culture insists on relationships, including love relationships, between large numbers of people. After all, culture exists by virtue of libidinous bonds in the form of identifications and the associated curbing of sexual drives (desexualization). This much Freud had made clear in *Group Psychology*. The question was now why culture demands this sexual restraint.

Freud’s line of approach was through the command to love one’s fellows, which is particularly prominent in Christianity but also has older, Jewish, roots. It is one of the most important imperatives in Christian culture: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”.⁸⁰ For Freud this was an impossible or undesirable duty. After all, you cannot love a stranger who has no significance for your own emotional life. It would also be unjust to love a stranger the same way you love a friend, a family member or someone else close to you. He formulated it even more strongly, along the line of his analyses in *Totem and Taboo*: strangers evoke feelings of hate rather than love.⁸¹ In *Totem and Taboo* he presented the stranger as a rival and compared this relationship with that between father and child, and between the primal father and sons. The image of the *Übermensch* is again reflected in his description of the stranger: the stranger will hurt me if it is to his advantage. He will “show his superior power”, particularly “the more helpless I am”.⁸² He will not be prevented from satisfying his desires. There is another Christian command that tells us to love the *Übermensch*: “Love thine enemies”. For Freud this command at least recognizes that the stranger comes to us not as a loved one but as an enemy. For the rest, however, it is as unreasonable as “loving thy neighbour”. This imperative is not included in the plan of Creation, so to speak; it is an ideal disconnected from the reality of human nature and social relationships.⁸³ Man is no bundle of sweetness, but rather a being with powerful aggressive tendencies who is intent on satisfaction and gain. Our fellow human beings are not only helpers and love

⁸⁰ Idem, p.109.

⁸¹ Idem, p.110.

⁸² Idem.

⁸³ J.J. DiCenso, *The Other Freud*, p.35.

objects, but also opponents. Freud had already used these examples in *Group Psychology* in order to demonstrate once and for all that there is no such thing as social instinct, only identification.

The imperatives to love are culture's answer to the existence of aggression. Because of aggression, it is inconceivable that work alone could bind people together: our drives are stronger than the rational advantage of the group.⁸⁴ Culture must and will do everything possible to restrain aggressive tendencies. This, Freud maintained, is also the reason for the command to love one another. The problem here is not love but the excessive character of the commandment which denies the distinction between loved ones and enemies, the good and the bad. Such a demand and inflation of Eros can only produce discontent and "damage to the aims of civilization."⁸⁵

Culture demands renunciation, not only of sexual drives, as Freud had so often argued, but also, here even more importantly, of aggression. As Hobbes maintained, primitive people could indulge themselves endlessly with the possibility of happiness, but also with the extremely slight chance of being able to enjoy that happiness for long. There were plenty of rivals; every possession was a danger in itself. Thus some of the opportunities for happiness (immediate need satisfaction) in civilization are sacrificed for security of life. According to Freud, the society of the time in which *Civilization and Its Discontents* appeared, seemed out of kilter. Under pressure from exacting commandments that were no longer motivated by sense but were simply required, happiness, which was already limited, had become much more so. Moreover, security was no longer assured. The panic on Wall Street after the 1929 stock market crash demonstrated that without leaders the modern masses easily disintegrate. Although civilization demands the renunciation of drives, it barely seems able to offer protection at critical times. This is sufficient reason for the modern hostility to civilization.⁸⁶

8.8 Schiller and Goethe: The Philosophers

The various approaches explored in the first five chapters of *Civilization and its Discontents* suggest that people are unhappy in and hostile to a civilization that demands submission to rules that do not bring immediate satisfaction. Not

⁸⁴ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.112.

⁸⁵ Idem, p.111. See also A. Lambertino, *Psychoanalyse und Moral bei Freud*, pp.270-274. In his seminar on the ethics of psychoanalysis Jacques Lacan has elaborated on Freud's exegesis of the Christian commandment to love one's neighbour and/or enemy. A concise interpretation of both Freud and Lacan on this subject is provided in M. de Kesel, *Eros & Ethiek. Een leetuur van Jacques Lacans Séminaire VII*, Acco, Leuven, Leusden, 2002, pp.166-174.

⁸⁶ Idem, pp.115-116. This short analysis of contemporary civilization is basically a further elaboration on *The Future of an Illusion* with its claim that religion is outdated and can no longer motivate cultural ideals. Here it seems that the religious illusions are (again) part of a general cultural illusion, namely the illusion of progress.

until chapter VI did Freud begin to formulate his model based on the analyses of happiness, hostility to civilization and love imperatives: hostility to civilization is the obvious counterpart to cultural development because there are two drives (Eros and Thanatos) at work in people as individuals and within civilization as a whole.⁸⁷ Although these may unite, they more often collide. He emphasized the latter: civilization is a struggle between two forces that strive for dominance. Civilization demands the renunciation of drives because there is no advantage in such collisions or in the expression of destructive drives between people. Civilization is assured when it succeeds in making individuals convert their aggression⁸⁸ into inner conflict.⁸⁹

Before moving on to the internalization of aggression, we should pause to consider the struggle within our civilization, as outlined by Freud in chapter VI. We have already seen in this study that the term “struggle” plays a role at crucial moments in his work. His theories on neuroses, repression, the drives and so forth are full of conflict: moral characters battle with deep desires, the Rat Man struggles against hate, sons fight against the primal father, and Dostoyevsky battles with his passions. The list is endless because Freud viewed human beings as full of conflict. This model of conflict also emerges in the tradition in which he places himself: Darwin’s struggle for existence, Hobbes’s (and Schopenhauer’s) *homo homini lupus*, Nietzsche’s analysis of morality as a struggle between instinct and ascetism. Yet it is not these philosophers who underpin the basic model here. Freud called chiefly upon the poet-philosophers Schiller and Goethe. Thus the struggle between the drives is certainly not the springboard for a Freudian ethics. Instead, it is a principle that tied in with Freud’s great love, tragedy. *Civilization and Its Discontents* is in fact the application of tragedy to civilization.

Unlike Schopenhauer who regarded the necessary “resignation” (*Verneinung*) of the will as man’s tragedy, Freud certainly did not aim to produce an exaggerated repression of the drives in the viewer or reader.⁹⁰ Nor did he opt for the antithesis of this pessimistic vision. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche had argued strongly against Schopenhauer. He saw tragedy as a spectacle, as a celebration of the drives and of the high-spirited Dionysian element.⁹¹ We do not find in Freud an

⁸⁷ On Eros as a key concept in Freudian thought with respect to the connection between individual and community see J.J. DiCenso, *The Other Freud*, pp.40-42.

⁸⁸ Freud stated: “I adopt the standpoint that the inclination to aggression is an original, self-subsisting instinctual disposition in man. (...) This aggressive instinct is the derivative and the main representative of the death instinct.” S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.122.

⁸⁹ *Idem*, pp.123ff.

⁹⁰ Schopenhauer had argued that *Verneinung* (which Rank and Juliusburger had compared to repression was the only possible solution to an ever pressing will (desire). He thus called for “resignation” or “ascetism”, referring not only to Christian mystic thinkers, but especially also to Buddhism. A. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, Volume 2*, chapter 48.

⁹¹ F. Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, in *Sämtliche Werke, Vol. 1*, pp.19ff.

essentially pessimistic or optimistic vision of tragedy.⁹² The “heavenly powers” (as he called the life and death drives, a reference to both Goethe and Kant)⁹³ exist within individuals themselves and within culture. Whether in conflict or in alliance, these powers can make an individual ill (cf. “*Civilized Sexual Morality*”) and unhappy, but at the same time they create the conditions and opportunities for the happiness that can be attained in life. Here lies the very essence of tragedy: human unhappiness and discontent, but also the limited opportunities for happiness and the strange forms this takes are determined by “heavenly powers” and by the attempts – successful or not – of individuals or groups to endure or even master them. Schiller and especially Goethe were the pre-psychoanalytic thinkers here. Freud suggested at the beginning of chapter VI of *Civilization and Its Discontents* that Schiller was the first to summarize drive theory using clear terminology. He cited the final lines of Schiller’s poem *Die Weltweisen* [The Philosophers] (1795), which state that hunger and love are the driving forces in the world.⁹⁴ The reference to this poem ties in perfectly with his argument regarding civilization up until that time. The tenor of the poem is as follows: we can explain the world physically, but metaphysics offers insights into deeper, higher processes. The earlier law of the jungle teaches us that we need morality. The fact that people need one another in order to achieve higher goals is something you can learn at university, but fundamentally it is nature that provides the building blocks of civilization: hunger and love are our deepest mainsprings. In short, every analysis of civilization and cultural morality leads to the deeper drives. This is also why Freud cited Schiller: hunger and love are nothing more than variants on what Freud had labelled the ego and sexual drives.

However, this was his original differentiation between the drives, which was soon criticized. The strict distinction could not be upheld because a number of

⁹² Elsewhere Freud wrote that his writings should not be assessed from the antithesis of pessimism and optimism, but as an analysis of the entanglement of Eros and Thanatos. S. Freud, *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, p.243. Also, “Freud’s theory of culture is less a call for resignation than an intertwining of a profound encounter with the necessity of unhappiness and an uncompromising indictment of the culture he describes”. A. Drassinower, *Freud’s Theory of Culture. Eros, Loss, and Politics*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham et al., 2003, p.13. Here, Drassinower rightfully argues that *Civilization and Its Discontents* is not a somber pessimistic book (as opposed to the optimism in *The Future of an Illusion*), but a “tragic celebration of the living”. The inevitability of common unhappiness and of struggle between the “heavenly forces” is in fact a reformulation of the idea expressed in *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* that every human has the duty to tolerate life. Central in Freud’s work are the inevitability of unhappiness (or sense of guilt), struggle and the return of the repressed, not progress. Compare also P. Meurs, G. Cluckers, J. Corveleyn, “Freuds ambivalentieconcept”, p.105; H. Politzer, *Freud und das Tragische*, p.152.

⁹³ S. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p.133, p.145. Freud mentioned the death instinct and the life instinct, the two principles which also determine culture and cultural morality, two *himmlische Mächte* [“heavenly powers”]. As is evident in his lectures, this is primarily a reference to a passage in Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason*. I. Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, pp.253-254; S. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures*, p.61, p.163. Second, “heavenly powers” is a reference to one of Goethe’s Songs of the Harp Player, the second part of which Freud cited. See below.

⁹⁴ Idem, p.117. F. Schiller, “Die Weltweisen”, in *Sämtliche Werke, Band I*, G. Fricke, H. Göpfert (eds.), Hanser Verlag, Munich, 1987, pp.221-223.

phenomena – sadism and narcissism – indicated an amalgamation of both drives. Freud described anew how his theory of narcissism appeared to open the door to Jung’s concept of the monistic libido, but maintained that he also adhered to a dualistic model that resulted in the introduction of the death and life drives.⁹⁵ These now became the twin concepts that battled it out: “The phenomena of life could be explained from the concurrent and mutually opposing action of these two instincts”.⁹⁶ Both are directed outwards: love in everything that binds people together, the death drive in all aggressive and destructive tendencies, and the two together in the many amalgamations (such as masochism and sadism). Freud wrote that it took some effort on his part to acknowledge the tendency towards evil in every individual, principally because this idea did not mesh with the view that a child was asexual and naturally good.⁹⁷

It is here, in this acknowledgement of the life and death instincts, that he refers to Goethe’s *Faust*.⁹⁸ He presents Goethe as a poet-philosopher who had clearly articulated this original bipolarity. Goethe had Mephistopheles declare that he stood for the destructive and aggressive principle⁹⁹ and that he fought against good, not in the form of the sacred or divine but the natural force directed towards reproduction and growth.

References to Goethe and Schiller were not new in Freud’s work. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* he regularly referred to poems by both writers. Yet he had a special fondness for *Faust*, particularly the initial scenes in Part I: Faust in his study and the first meeting with Mephistopheles. Quotations from Goethe’s work accompany his oeuvre like a “Leitmotif”.¹⁰⁰ The most famous of all is undoubtedly “in the beginning was the Deed”, the final sentence from *Totem and Taboo*. The closing sentence of *Outline of Psychoanalysis* also ends with a quote from *Faust*.¹⁰¹ We have already seen how the term *Übermensch* was not only borrowed from Nietzsche, but is also a reference to *Faust*.¹⁰² Freud even dedicated an article to Goethe: *A Childhood Recollection from “Dichtung und Wahrheit”*. The fact that Freud regularly quotes Goethe is certainly an expression of his love for Goethe’s work. When he won the Frankfurt Goethe Prize in 1930, he wrote that he saw Goethe as a forerunner of psychoanalysis, and even as a “father” and “teacher”. To his mind Goethe was a trailblazer who propounded intuitive ideas

⁹⁵ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.118.

⁹⁶ Idem, p.119.

⁹⁷ Idem, p.120.

⁹⁸ Idem, pp.120-121.

⁹⁹ Idem; W. Goethe, *Faust. Erster Teil*, in *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens, Band 6.1*, K. Richter et al. (eds.), Hanser Verlag, Munich, 1986-1998, pp.535-673 (571).

¹⁰⁰ K. Brath, “Goethe und Freud – eine besondere Seelenverwandtschaft”, in *Psychologie Heute* 26 (1999), pp.38-43.

¹⁰¹ “Was du ererbst von deinen Vätern hast, erwirb es, um es zu besitzen” [What thou hast inherited from thy fathers, acquire it to make it thine]. S. Freud, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis, SE XXIII*, p.207.

¹⁰² W. Goethe, *Faust. Erster Teil*, p.548.

about the human soul, which psychoanalysis could only confirm later and with considerably more effort.¹⁰³

Which ideas of Goethe's are we dealing with here? How did Freud read *Faust*? If we are to believe his *Autobiographical Study*, he came into critical contact with Goethe's work even before his student days, in particular the 1782 essay *Nature*.¹⁰⁴ This essay consists of aphorisms in which Goethe not only romantically sings the praises of the beauty and meaning of nature, but above all describes how nature urges on everything that lives. Here Goethe describes nature as a hidden and mysterious force both around and within people, a persistent force that we are almost powerless to resist. It is a force which builds and destroys. Aimed at pleasure, it sustains everything that lives. It creates both love and rifts between people. It speaks "true and false" and thus "everything is its fault, everything to its credit". These quotes reflect the tenor of the essay: nature – including human nature – consists of original oppositions. Thus even before Freud's university years, Goethe lay at the heart of his psychoanalysis, which was also repeatedly determined by oppositions, by bipolarity. Further evidence that he read Goethe in this way can be found in his 1930 writing. Goethe clearly proclaimed in *Faust* that human nature is governed by the will to live and by destructive drives.¹⁰⁵ Freud also regularly quoted a second element from Goethe's world: the hidden and the veiled – the unconscious, the repressed – of the deepest human motives.¹⁰⁶

Up until this point we could say that Freud read Goethe as he had read Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Yet there is a difference. Freud rejected the moralist and theologian in Nietzsche and criticized Schopenhauer, but he embraced Goethe and Schiller completely, including their moralistic idea that relationships between people are affective bonds which do – and should – take the form of friendships within a culture.¹⁰⁷ In *Group Psychology* Freud had listed the various loves associated with people: self-love, love for one's parents, friendships and a general love of humankind.¹⁰⁸ He routinely pointed out that in order to become an independent individual in the world the first narcissistic and Oedipal object choices must be overcome. At the other end of the spectrum, he argued that a general love of humankind, as demanded by the commandment to love thy neighbour, was impossible and led to an inflated idea of love. The only remaining ideal was that of friendship.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ S. Freud, *The Goethe Prize*, SE XXI, pp.208-212.

¹⁰⁴ S. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, p.8; W. Goethe, *Die Natur*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, Band 2.2, pp.477-479.

¹⁰⁵ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pp.120-121; S. Freud. *The Goethe Prize*, p.209.

¹⁰⁶ Idem, p.212.

¹⁰⁷ Compare S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pp.74-75; S. Freud. *The Goethe Prize*, p.210.

¹⁰⁸ S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.90.

¹⁰⁹ It is in keeping with the tragic character of *Civilization and Its Discontents* that Freud made a plea for friendship at the end of his life when many of his friends had either died or broken with him.

Freud read *Faust* as a book in which Goethe set out his ideas on human nature. He read *Faust* as a tragedy: the struggle (and the link) between good and evil, the death and life drives, is fatal for Faust himself. Faust is a tormented figure from the very beginning and remains so until the bitter end. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud sketched the Faustian world in his focus on the struggle between the drives. These “heavenly powers” determine our fate. And what is that fate? The answer can be found in the second half of a single one of Goethe’s Songs of the Harp Player which Freud quotes:¹¹⁰

[*Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen aß
Wer nie die kummervollen Nächte
auf seinem Bette weinend saß
Der kennt euch nicht ihr himmlischen Mächte.*]

*Ihr führt in’s Leben uns hinein,
Ihr laßt den Armen schuldig werden,
Dann überlaßt Ihr ihn den Pein,
Denn jede Schuld rächt sich auf Erden.*¹¹¹

Fate is evidently the sense of guilt, the self-torture or self-punishment that burdens us. Freud was able to agree with Goethe on this point.

8.9 Struggle

Freud introduced the life and death drives into his text in order to anchor human aggression. He attempted to formulate an answer to a problem he had clearly set out in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. His point of departure there was the existence of Eros and Thanatos. His repeated assertions that the death instinct is a “dumb” drive that operates in silence showed us how highly speculative this concept was. Yet he continued to use it. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* he now argued that these are manifested as aggressive or destructive drives.¹¹² He

¹¹⁰ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.133; W. Goethe, “Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen aß”, in *Sämtliche Werke, Band 2.2*, p.211.

¹¹¹ Who never ate his bread with sorrow,
Who never spent the darksome hours
Weeping and watching for the morrow,
He knows ye not, ye gloomy Powers.

To earth, this weary earth, ye bring us
To guilt ye let us heedless go,
Then leave repentance fierce to wring us:
A moment’s guilt, an age of woe!

Translation: Thomas Carlyle (compare *Standard Edition*).

¹¹² Compare also S. Freud, *Why War?*, *SE XXII*, p.209.

postulated that the original hate present in an individual and which initially turns against the construction of the ego combines with the life drive at a very early stage and can then be redirected as aggression towards others.¹¹³

Civilization – defined as a supra-individual process – mainly perceives our destructive tendencies as an obstacle and a danger. After all, it organizes our sexual drives within social relationships (families, friendships, tribes, nations). Its goal is to bind people libidinally to one another. Freud had explored this relationship between culture and the repression of sexual drives in “*Civilized Sexual Morality*”. The idea at that time was that many neuroses can be attributed to an excessively strict morality. In other words, a repressive culture takes its toll, although “normal” people find this acceptable. Now, in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud was dealing with the repression of aggression, whereby each individual is in fact victimized by civilization. The civilization into which individuals are born, and which shapes them, struggles against human aggression and forces each person to deal with that struggle internally. Civilization enforces the renunciation of drives, which leads to internal conflict. Only the primal father, the *Übermensch*, could indulge his instincts without inner conflict, but since his death, it is civilization that prohibits this. In Freud’s view, it is difficult to establish what happened before the time of the *Übermensch*.¹¹⁴ Since that time, however, culture has demanded that individuals struggle in various ways with their aggressive tendencies. From that

¹¹³ It has been rightfully argued that Freud did not really need the speculative concept of the death drive at all; the theory of helplessness was enough to explain love and hate. A helpless child can do nothing but attempt to defend itself (hate) against what threatens it and love what protects it. T. Geykens, Ph. van Haute, *Van doodsdrijf tot hechtingstheorie*, pp.166ff. In the words of Ernest Jones: why can’t aggression and the consequent sense of guilt be explained by “what are called “reactive” instincts”? S. Freud, E. Jones, *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones*, p.667. Without wanting to defend Freud, I see a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the death drive is a speculative idea expressing that there is an innate tendency towards evil (“human inclination to badness”), which makes the tendency towards aggression ubiquitous. S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.120. It is important to note that this aggression is of a different kind to that associated with helplessness. The rejection of what is threatening is not amoral; it could even provide new evidence for the pre-Freudian idea that children enter the world unspoiled, but are surrounded by threatening objects. A second reason for standing by and confirming the death instinct undoubtedly stems from his obstinacy in debates with others. The death and life instincts as fundamental polarities were Freud’s definitive answer to Jung’s monism. Whenever he wrote about these drives he referred to this point of controversy with Jung. Freud’s concept of helplessness was principally an answer to Rank, who in turn also tried to derive the mental constitution from a single original trauma which could explain everything. This is also why Freud wished to retain the death and life instincts in addition to helplessness. They were to guard against any possible Jungian monism. They were the great debates that had prompted him to retain the death and life instincts even though he considered them hypothetical and “dumb”. The association of the “human inclination to badness” with the Christian concept of sin confirms our suspicions here: the death drive is not a clinical concept, but a Freudian dogma.

¹¹⁴ Freud began chapter seven with a somewhat noteworthy reference to complex and mysterious forms of society among bees and termites. Freud was reacting to one of the most curious articles in *Imago*: L.R. Delves Broughton, “Vom Leben der Bienen und Termiten. Psychoanalytische Bemerkungen”, in *Imago* 14 (1928), pp.142-146. In this article the author applied Freud’s theory of repression and identification to bees and termites.

moment on the power of the individual was replaced by that of culture. The fact that this struggle creates victims in the form of neuroses is no longer exceptional. Each individual, whether neurotic or not, is a victim of civilization's demands. It is just that the conflict is easier to detect in neurotics.

The question now for Freud was which tools does culture use to curb aggression? It has technologies to make life easier, it provides opportunities for sublimation, it reflects illusions and offers anaesthesia (intoxication). It can also direct aggression towards a single, common enemy. Yet according to Freud, the most important tool is without doubt the internalization of aggression: culture redirects aggression back to its place of origin.¹¹⁵ The actual means to do so is therefore individual conscience. The tension between the conscience – which is now the principal repressor of the superego – and the ego is the sense of guilt.¹¹⁶ In this way the sense of guilt has once again and definitively been labelled the core experience of every individual.

The sense of guilt designates the tension between the superego and the ego, and hence between culture and the individual. This tells us little about where the sense of guilt comes from. In other words, why is the tension designated in terms of guilt? Freud briefly referred to accepted theories regarding the sense of guilt, that it can be traced back to a debt, a moral offence. This theory is unsatisfactory, however, because the sense of guilt also manifests itself when the idea of or desire to commit a crime arises.¹¹⁷ This presupposes that an individual has an understanding of good and evil before good or evil has occurred. It also supposes that this consciousness can lead to a sense of guilt. Of course, he dismisses the idea that good and evil are inherited and innate, as he had done earlier. Individuals need an “extraneous influence” that determines what is good and evil, which in turn means that individuals had to have had a motive for allowing themselves to be influenced.¹¹⁸

Given that Freud had named helplessness as the motive, this is hardly a matter of choice. The motive points to bitter necessity. The individual can do nothing but submit to being influenced. After all, as we saw earlier, this helplessness means that the small child is dependent upon the loving (mother) and devoted protection (father) of others. It naturally accompanies the fear about loss of love. It is this helplessness that first confronts the child with evil. Evil is what can be punished through the loss of love. It does not matter whether the evil has actually been committed or whether it is simply a thought or desire. What really matters is that the danger does not arise until an authority – a parent, or perhaps a sibling – discovers the evil. A secret thought or desire is not easily detected.

¹¹⁵ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, chapters VII-VIII.

¹¹⁶ *Idem*, p.123.

¹¹⁷ *Idem*, p.124.

¹¹⁸ *Idem*.

At this stage of very early helplessness – the state of mind that is called “bad conscience”¹¹⁹ – the sense of guilt is no more than the fear of loss of love.¹²⁰ It is too early to call it a sense of guilt or a guilty conscience. A major change occurs once the superego is established and the authority is internalized. Repressed desires can no longer go undetected, and there can be no more secret thoughts. The distinction between doing evil and thinking or wishing evil disappears as the superego also discovers the most secret thoughts. This renders the fear of being discovered, however momentary, less important.

8.10 Anxiety and the sense of guilt once again

Freud reflected anew on the connection between anxiety and the sense of guilt. Not only is it the subject of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, as Freud also dealt with it at length in a 1932 lecture entitled “Anxiety and instinctual life”.¹²¹ There he distanced himself from an earlier lecture on anxiety from 1917, which at the time was an important source of inspiration for Rank and his *Trauma of Birth*. We have already seen how Freud responded to Rank. He did not agree that the sense of guilt was sublimated castration anxiety. Instead he focused on castration anxiety as part of the Oedipus complex. Anxiety is a reaction to a danger and the most important danger is punishment by one’s father. In 1932 he reiterated his position that anxiety is manifested in neuroses and phobias when Oedipal desires surface. Anxiety is thus a reaction to recurring aggressive or sexual impulses as a result of repression.

It was clear to Freud that only the ego can produce and note anxiety. The three forms of anxiety (realistic anxiety, neurotic anxiety and moral anxiety) therefore correspond to the three instances which the ego should bear in mind and fear: the external world, the id and the superego.¹²² Freud now thought that realistic anxiety as a response to a threat from the external world predated the repression of Oedipal desires. After all, the motivation to repress Oedipal desires lies in the real danger of punishment in the form of loss of love, that is to say, the danger of castration. He argued that this is a male anxiety; girls do not experience real castration anxiety, although they do experience the anxiety of loss of love as an extension of the fear of missing one’s mother. Girls are familiar with the castration complex, but not castration anxiety. (I shall return to this later.)

The fact that girls do experience the fear of loss of love should not be explained in terms of castration anxiety being traced back to a birth trauma.¹²³ Freud once

¹¹⁹ Idem.

¹²⁰ Idem, p.125.

¹²¹ S. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures*, pp.81-111.

¹²² Idem, p.85.

¹²³ Idem, pp.87-88.

again distanced himself from Rank and the idea that every later anxiety unfolds along the lines of the first anxiety, and that this anxiety can be overcome in each subsequent developmental phase. In Rank's view every individual in fact develops an increasingly strong ego by virtue of processing the trauma of birth. Yet, as practice had taught Freud, anxiety is not conquered: moral anxiety stays with us throughout our lives and is indeed necessary to make human coexistence possible.¹²⁴ Aggressive and sexual drives, which appear as Oedipal desires linked to people, are repressed by the ego principally because they recall danger. In response to the bubbling up of desires, the ego has just two options: a conscious working through or a continued repression, strongly supported by the superego. Anxiety is thus always in proportion to the drives and desires, as well as the danger of punishment. And even if birth were the first experience of fear, this trauma should not be seen as a model for every subsequent anxiety; after all, there can be no desires or punishment at birth. When, as a follow-up to his lecture, Freud addressed drive theory, it became even clearer why birth anxiety can never be truly determinative. The ego, which can experience fear, is a construct which achieves a degree of perfection in narcissism. Only here can the danger of castration and the fear that this unleashes be a decisive factor. After all, the continued existence of the ego is at stake, an ego that can be in opposition to the external world and to one's own drives (the id).

This is reinforced by another important point Freud touched upon following his 1932 lecture: humankind is not born good or evil, nor is the concept of good and evil innate.¹²⁵ This idea is important because the fear of castration in fact implies a consciousness of good and evil. After all, there is an ego that is aware that certain drive-based manifestations are viewed by others as undesirable. And although this awareness does not mean an internal censure of those drives and desires, the ego knows that it is a good idea to conceal the undesirable and not to convert it into action.

These ideas from his lecture are sufficient to give us a better understanding of Freud's argument regarding anxiety and the sense of guilt in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. The idea that the fear of loss of love is actually an initial stage of the sense of guilt must be emphasized here.¹²⁶ The decisive difference between fear of loss of love and moral anxiety is the shift from an authority located in the external world to an inner, authoritarian component of the ego, the superego. This shift means that fear as a momentary signal prompted by the fear of discovery is replaced by a permanent tension between the ego and superego in the form of a sense of guilt. Freud thus never called the sense of guilt a signal.

¹²⁴ Idem, p.88.

¹²⁵ Idem, pp.103f.

¹²⁶ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.124. Compare also J. Deigh, "Freud's later theory of civilization: Changes and implications", p.298.

It therefore seems correct to see the fear of loss of love (as a possible punishment for a still undiscovered or uncommitted crime) as an initial form of the sense of guilt. This idea is reinforced by the fact that a child has an understanding of good and evil without this having led to an internalized moral function – here Freud wrote of a “first stage” of conscience formation.¹²⁷

The major difference between anxiety and the sense of guilt is thus whether authority is internalized.¹²⁸ Freud emphasized this point: the transition from fear of loss of love to sense of guilt is entirely governed by the internalization of authority. This is also why the superego is hostile towards the ego. Freud considered it remarkable that the superego became more suspicious as the ego became more reliable.¹²⁹ The ego is always approached as if it were hiding something secret. Thus a more primitive fear of discovery is preserved in the functioning of the conscience. He explained this mechanism by means of the history of the Jewish people as chronicled in the Tanakh. They see themselves as a chosen people; one misfortune after another (loss of love) does not result in questioning God’s righteousness, but in the prophets’ mission to point out their own guilt. Better an accusing prophet (among the people) than a lost god. This idea about the Jewish people demonstrates, according to Freud, that the internalized conscience function is the successor to the fear of loss of love (castration anxiety).¹³⁰

Freud’s pronouncement that the sense of guilt has two origins – fear of authority (discovery and loss of love and fear of the superego – must therefore be interpreted in this context: fear of loss of love already has the character of a moral function (“bad conscience”); it is, as “social anxiety”, a first (unconscious) stage of sense of guilt (consciousness of guilt).

8.11 Drive renunciation

Freud then approached drive renunciation from the point of view of anxiety and the sense of guilt. Initially renunciation is based on fear of loss of love at the hands of an external authority. If renunciation is successful at this stage in the form of concealment, then no sense of guilt arises. It is a different matter for the fear of conscience, the fear of the superego. Here the desires cannot be suppressed, thereby giving rise to a sense of guilt. Tragically, the imminent external danger is traded for lasting unhappiness, “through the heightening of the sense of guilt”.¹³¹

The severity of the conscience is based on the strength of the drive to renunciation. The ultimate explanation as to why virtuous people have such

¹²⁷ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.125.

¹²⁸ See also M. Vansina, *Het super-ego*, pp.240ff.

¹²⁹ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.126.

¹³⁰ *Idem*, p.127.

¹³¹ *Idem*, p.134.

powerful consciences is that each new renunciation strengthens the power of the conscience. Freud had also argued this in *The Ego and the Id*.¹³² When applied to the argument about the internalization of aggression, the implications are clear: each repression of aggression increases the severity (aggression) of the conscience. The severity is initially determined by the severity of the external authority underlying the conscience. Naturally, it is through identification that this authority can be internalized. This also enabled Freud to explain why the severity of the superego does not correspond to the actual severity of the father: the difference between them is an individual's own aggression, which now also turns against the ego.¹³³ Freud responded with approval to Melanie Klein's ideas on this subject. In 1928 she had argued that it was implausible that the strictness of the superego should correspond to the actual strictness of the father (parents). The superego is not only the product of identification with a parent figure; its formation begins when an individual's own aggression and anxiety are directed against the ego. This becomes possible when the aggression and anxiety are first projected onto the external world (including the father) and are then internalized in this roundabout way.¹³⁴

For Freud this dual formative power of the superego gives us all the more reason to assume that the sense of guilt is inevitable.¹³⁵ It therefore comes as no surprise that he once again reflects upon *Totem and Taboo* and the meaning of "a phylogenetic model" at the end of chapter VII.¹³⁶ After all, the new theory seems to render primal patricide superfluous. He now emphasized emotional ambivalence more than ever (and thus defended the thesis of the primal murder as the outcome of this ambivalence of love and hate feelings). What matters is thus that the sense of guilt arose as an expression of the ambivalent feelings of love and hate, of "the eternal struggle between Eros and the instinct of destruction or death".¹³⁷ In the most primitive social relationships, families, the primal model is the Oedipus complex. As civilization develops, with larger social units at stake, this model persists, thereby reinforcing the sense of guilt over time. This brings us back to an old theme: in modern culture the sense of guilt threatens to become too great for the individual, and hence unbearable.¹³⁸ The reference to Goethe at the end of *Totem and Taboo* is now modified to accommodate Freud's qualification: all individuals, whether or not they have done anything, cannot escape being guilty in the eyes of the "heavenly powers" of Eros and Thanatos.

¹³² S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, chapter V.

¹³³ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.130.

¹³⁴ M. Klein, "Early Stages of the Oedipus Complex", in *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945*, R.E. Money-Kyrle (ed.), Hogarth Press, London, 1975, pp.186-198.

¹³⁵ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.132.

¹³⁶ *Idem*, pp.131-132.

¹³⁷ *Idem*, p.132.

¹³⁸ See, Th. Reik, *Freud als Kulturkritiker*, Max Präger Verlag, Vienna, Leipzig, 1930, p.83.

8.12 Discontents

The tragic conclusion Freud was forced to reach was not only that the sense of guilt was “the most important problem in the development of civilization”, but also that this inescapable feeling constituted the most important reason for the impossibility of happiness.¹³⁹ It is religions which delude us with the promise of happiness; they – and he referred here primarily to Judaism – also have traditions which internalize aggression and nourish a sense of guilt. Religion’s message is thus also paradoxical and that only strengthens people’s unhappiness – they preach deliverance from guilt and unhappiness yet produce quite the reverse.

Thus the sense of guilt is central. Yet is it actually the sense of guilt? Freud now spoke of discontents (*Unbehagen*). That which has been repressed is constantly insistent here and the obsessional neurotic’s self-restraint is equally constantly active. There are so many “possibilities of anxiety”, moments when control slips, that it is better to speak of an omnipresent discontent.¹⁴⁰ That is naturally a vaguer term than consciousness of guilt or sense of guilt, but it describes well the strained atmosphere of the obsessional neurosis and, by analogy, of civilization.

It is indeed based on an analogy with (once again) obsessional neurosis that Freud extended the idea of discontent to all of culture. It is “very conceivable that the sense of guilt produced by civilization is not perceived as such either, and remains to a large extent unconscious, or appears as a sort of *malaise*, a dissatisfaction, for which people seek other motivations”.¹⁴¹ The sense of guilt within culture is thus an unconscious sense of guilt. What is conscious is the discontent, the dissatisfaction which cannot be attributed to that sense of guilt but preferably to external circumstances or other people. This is the situation in which Christians are able to blame Jews and Communists the bourgeoisie. The term discontent is certainly negatively formulated as the absence of contentment. We might think his point was to transform discontent into contentment, yet as we have already seen that contentment is also not positive given that it is impossible to realize. After all, *Behagen* is contentment with the connotation of serenity. This serenity is not a happy situation. He did not choose an ideal of pleasure, but rather an “optimal” relationship between discontent and happiness.

With discontent Freud added a concept to a series of mutually related terms – superego, conscience, sense of guilt, need for punishment and also remorse. Freud briefly explained their coherence – the superego is part of the ego; the conscience is a function of the superego; the sense of guilt is the superego’s severity or the conscience’s harshness, as perceived by the ego which is under constant surveillance and judgement. The need for punishment is an expression

¹³⁹ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.134. See also J. Deigh, “Freud’s later theory of civilization”, p.302.

¹⁴⁰ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.135.

¹⁴¹ Idem, pp.135-136.

on the part of the ego which under the influence of a sadistic superego has become masochistic. He immediately added that the sense of guilt is older than the superego and the conscience – the sense of guilt can be recognized in the fear of external authority, in the tension between the ego and the other.¹⁴² In this it is the direct descendant of the tension between the need for love from an authority and the drive for instinctual satisfaction which brings it into conflict with that same authority releasing aggression. In other words, the sense of guilt appears as soon as the child, helplessly, enters Oedipal relationships. He reserves the use of the word remorse (*Reue*) for the ego's reaction in a case of sense of guilt which arises after an actual crime.¹⁴³

Once again Freud linked these ideas back to *Totem and Taboo*. The sense of guilt on the part of the son-horde after the murder was in fact nothing other than remorse for the actual crime. The superego arose after the primal murder and the initial sense of guilt generated by the first internalization of authority and the formation of social bonds. In this process the differentiation between actual events and desired actions disappeared resulting in a lasting tension between the ego and superego. Thus the first episode of remorse gave birth to a lasting cultural feeling of guilt.

Freud returned to the theme of the interfaces, tension and similarities between individual and cultural development. Individuals strive selfishly for happiness. In fact, development proceeds according to the “programme of the pleasure principle” and is thus about satisfaction.¹⁴⁴ In this development an individual is confronted with the fact that adaptation to culture and interaction with others is a condition for achieving happiness. He described here what he had earlier called the relationship between the pleasure and the reality principles. As regards individual development, that also means that an individual strives to mould reality, that is culture, to his will. He will attempt in an altruistic way to satisfy his selfish desire for happiness. We must therefore consider that the libidinous attachment to others is also a way of satisfying narcissistic desires. After all, it is attachments to others that makes it possible to be loved. The problem for the individual is that culture demands that an individual fit in and adapt in a specific way. Individual happiness is not one of culture's goals. A conflict arises between individual desires and cultural goals. This conflict is between the narcissistic desire to achieve happiness for oneself (ego libido) and the cultural demand of a specific libidinous attachment to another object (object libido). Despite the tension and conflict, Freud saw an analogy in individual and cultural development. After all, they share the aim of a libidinous attachment to others. For an individual that is a selfish necessity while for culture it is a necessary demand in order to maintain itself.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Idem, p.136.

¹⁴³ Idem, p.137.

¹⁴⁴ Idem, p.140.

¹⁴⁵ Idem, pp.139-141.

Freud now continued the analogy between individuals and culture further – culture, that is to say any group of people, has a superego as well.¹⁴⁶ We can understand this against the background of group psychology – a group consists not only by virtue of horizontal attachments, it also needs a leader. The cultural superego (*Kultur-Über-Ich*)¹⁴⁷ is based on the impression earlier leaders and father figures have made, just as with the individual superego. These earlier leaders usually had a history similar to that of the primal father – they were ridiculed and murdered and via the principle of the sense of guilt subsequently attained divinity.¹⁴⁸ Another analogy between the individual and cultural superego is that both set up “strict ideal demands”.¹⁴⁹ For that matter, this analogy has firm borders – in the individual the intrinsic motives for the demands are unconscious. After all, the demands of the superego are based on aggressive drives which must be repressed and identifications with parent figures which are repressed with the Oedipus complex. Yet in culture these demands and ideals of the superego are clearly formulated. The demands are expressed in a culture’s ethics. At its core ethics is meant to embody a culture’s ideals, that is to say, the ideal, the goal, of libidinous attachment. That which is forbidden is thus also directed to limiting aggression, that which is commanded to libidinous attachment.

The same difficulties exist with regard to these commands and prohibitions made by the cultural superego as we find with an individual superego of above average development. The superego is often too demanding and its demands are not realistic. The superego is the id’s advocate – in its unrealistic exactingness it fails to take into account the real power of the ego. It demands merely with an illusory outlook. Although Freud here wrote about ethics and cultural morality, it is clear that these ethics have all the characteristics of religion. The main reference is again the Christian commandment to love thy neighbour.¹⁵⁰ We see here the roles of morality and religion somewhat reversed – religion is here not so much part of cultural morality, rather cultural morality bears the marks of religious commandments. That shift is only conceivable against the background of the idea that at the root of the cultural superego there are cultural leaders. Those personalities are not ethicists such as Kant, but founders of religion such as Christ. What is crucial here is the deification whereby father figures are able to retain their authority over time.

Freud entered into this even more deeply. He wanted to pause briefly at another analogy. If an excessive superego can lead to neurosis, is it then possible to call some culture ages neurotic?¹⁵¹ And extending that question further, can psychoanalysis provide therapeutic suggestions? The problem is naturally What is

¹⁴⁶ Idem, p.141.

¹⁴⁷ On this issue see A. Lambertino, *Psychoanalyse und Moral bei Freud*, pp.258-264.

¹⁴⁸ A nice example of a leader like this is Christ. S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.142.

¹⁴⁹ Idem.

¹⁵⁰ Idem, pp.142-143.

¹⁵¹ Idem, p.144.

normal? The obsessional neurotic can be identified as someone with an abnormal constitution compared to a normal group of people. When discussing a culture in its entirety that is not possible. Yet, Freud did suggest the possibility of mapping the “pathology” – or may we say “mentality” – of cultural communities.

It is clear that at the end of *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud wrestled anew with the appreciation for modern culture of which he was a member and critic.¹⁵² If there is a culture which could be called neurotic then it is certainly modern culture which places enormous demands on individuals and simultaneously serves up even higher ideals. It is culture itself, as we saw earlier, which sees itself as the most developed form to date. For Freud culture is precious and demanding, nourishing on the one hand an ideal of humanity that is admirable while on the other hand it makes individuals unhappy by excessively limiting sexual and aggressive drives. Also, he did not want to pass judgement. His own ambivalent feelings regarding modern culture appear subsequently in his refusal to be a “prophet” – because in that therapeutic role he could only offer illusory comfort, as religions had always done – in order to end with a “prophetic” pronouncement. The fate of a culture will always depend upon the answer to the question of whether and how it succeeds in organizing libidinous attachments and remaining the master of aggression. Yet people can still take fate into their own hands and make possible that happiness which is within reason.

8.13 A new debate

In *Civilization and Its Discontents* conscience emerges as being the dominant function of the superego. That conscience indicates an internalization of an external, critical authority which is directed at every undesired drive that bubbles up with the power to repress it with equal force. This is how aggression is internalized. This is also how the death drive re-emerges in that aggressive conscience employed for inner restraint.

By making the sense of guilt as an individual and cultural experience central, aggression also figures centrally. The connection is obvious. Since the introduction of the Oedipus complex and his studies into obsessional neurosis, Freud had always emphasized aggression and hate toward the loved person as having activated the sense of guilt. This feeling is always based upon ambivalent feelings towards a person. That person is the father – he is the one who is loved because he can offer protection against helplessness. Yet he is also a young boy’s rival, an obstacle to achieving the desired relationship with the mother. Freud emphatically emphasized that the sense of guilt can only arise from these ambivalent feelings and that aggression or hate is a necessary component of this. Although that aggression never manifests itself purely or in isolation but is always linked to a sexual drive aimed at satisfaction (an “erotic demand”), Freud nonetheless sought

¹⁵² Idem, pp.144-145.

the heightening of the sense of guilt to “frustration” and “applying only to the aggressive instincts”.¹⁵³

Freud was reacting to a number of articles by a largely new generation of psychoanalysts. These were primarily Ernest Jones, Susan Isaacs and Melanie Klein. Freud noted that he objected to their “idea that any kind of frustration, any thwarted instinctual satisfaction, results, or may result, in a heightening of the sense of guilt”.¹⁵⁴ This observation must be understood within a broader discussion in which other analysts, such as Joan Riviere, Karen Horney, Jeanne Lampl-De Groot and Helene Deutsch played a significant role. It is a discussion about the meaning of the pre-Oedipal phase and the female Oedipus complex, but chiefly also about the formation of the conscience and the sense of guilt.

It would take us too far afield to discuss the entire debate around Freud and between the various analysts so I shall limit myself to their main features.¹⁵⁵ In the 1920s a new generation of analysts created a furore which took the form of an internal dispute over theory. The most promising of this generation was Melanie Klein.¹⁵⁶ Based upon her insight into the analysis of small children (principally), she began to publish in 1921. Her findings quickly appeared to conflict with Freud’s ideas on small child development. This led to a serious debate between Klein and Freud’s daughter, Anna, but tension between Freud and Jones also increased because Jones tended to support Klein’s findings.¹⁵⁷ As early as 1925 Freud wrote to Jones that Klein’s views were being received with scepticism in Vienna.¹⁵⁸ Yet only in 1927 did Freud make clear that Klein’s ideas on the superego of small children did not match his own. Jones answered that he saw only a single difference between Klein and Freud – she dated the origin of the Oedipus complex and the superego somewhat earlier than he. Freud was concerned about the idea that the superego’s genesis was uncoupled from identification with parent(s).¹⁵⁹ When he reacted briefly to this in a letter to Jones regarding a kindred spirit of Klein’s, Joan Riviere, he led up to it with the above-mentioned observation in *Civilization and Its Discontents*: “we are not yet agreed on the genesis of guilt

¹⁵³ Idem, p.138.

¹⁵⁴ Idem.

¹⁵⁵ The debate on the superego and the sense of guilt between Freud and the London school (Klein, Jones et al.) is a topic seldom broadly discussed in the literature. Even Speciale-Bagliacca, who discussed guilt and remorse in the writings of Klein and Donald Winnicott, and who starts off with a short discussion of Freud, does not pay any attention to Freud’s debate with the London school. This is an omission, because this debate can be seen as the starting point of both Klein’s emancipation from Freud and the birth of object relations theory. R. Speciale-Bagliacca, *Guilt*.

¹⁵⁶ On Melanie Klein and her early work see K. Grosskurth, *Melanie Klein: Her world and Her Work*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1986, part III; M. Likierman, *Melanie Klein: Her Work in Context*, Continuum, New York, London, 2001, pp.44-84.

¹⁵⁷ E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 3*, p.137, pp.196-197. On Klein and Anna Freud see also J.-B. Fages, *Geschichte der Psychoanalyse nach Freud*, Ullstein Materialien, Frankfurt, Berlin, Vienna, 1981, chapter VII.

¹⁵⁸ S. Freud, E. Jones, *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones*, p.579.

¹⁵⁹ Idem, p.617.

feelings".¹⁶⁰ Riviere maintained that a frustrated need for satisfaction led to a sense of guilt while Freud believed this sort of frustration only led to a stronger desire for satisfaction "with a tendency to ruthless rejection of moral precepts".¹⁶¹ It was exactly this tendency which released the dynamic of prohibition by the parent(s) and the child's aggression.

Despite the passionate emotions of various analysts, we have already seen that in *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud accepted an important suggestion of Klein's – the severity of the conscience is not a reflection of the parents' actual severity alone.¹⁶² Yet there remained clear, and from Freud's perspective unbridgeable, differences. The crucial difference of opinion lay in views of the genesis of the superego and the sense of guilt. After the debate with Rank regarding pre-Oedipal anxiety, now came the debate regarding the pre-Oedipal contours of the superego and the sense of guilt.

When, in 1927, Freud made clear to Jones that Klein had taken positions which he could not reconcile with his own, he mainly meant an article of hers which had appeared the previous year.¹⁶³ In that article, in which the analysis of a little girl was central, she argued that at about the age of two hate and aggression, as well as anxiety and sense of guilt, manifested themselves in the girl's fixation upon her mother. The girl was in a kind of permanent state of war with her mother who was not only the first love object and provided satisfaction (breast), but who was also quickly hated because she denied the child satisfaction. The mother refused to be completely at the child's disposal and that released aggression very early in her development. That aggression increased when the mother also became a rival in the child's relationship with her father. In short, the little girl experienced strongly ambivalent feelings of love and hate vis-à-vis her mother. The aggression was perceived by the child as dangerous to her love for her mother. The direct consequence was fear of the loss of love and the first sense of guilt on account of the aggression. In this early sense of guilt and the effect of restraining aggression Klein saw the first contours of what was completed around age four, the superego. That also meant that the Oedipus complex began earlier than had been believed. The first frustrations and drive limitations led immediately to aggression and a sense of guilt. The same issue was repeated and worked out in the article against which Freud campaigned in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Klein's point of departure is that the Oedipus complex began earlier than had been understood up to that time. Aggression toward the love object and thus also sense of guilt arise as soon as frustration enters the equation. This is the origin of the earliest form of conscience. That formation and the sense of guilt thus precede identification with

¹⁶⁰ Idem, p.636.

¹⁶¹ Idem.

¹⁶² In his 1931 article on female sexuality he also adopted a number of Klein's points. See our discussion of Freud's *Female Sexuality* further on in this chapter.

¹⁶³ M. Klein, "The Psychological Principles of Early Analysis", in *Love, Guilt and Reparation*, pp.128-138.

the father. In both boys and girls the earliest conscience is principally determined by the mother imago, but with boys the father image immediately gets the upper hand on account of castration anxiety.¹⁶⁴

The Kleinian standpoint is sharply and succinctly described in a short article by Riviere against which Freud reacted in the above-mentioned letter to Jones.¹⁶⁵ Riviere's position was clear – psychoanalysis as developed by Freud was the discovery of the meaning of the child's fantasy (imagination). The term imagination is central – the Oedipus complex does not go back to a historical core, but is a fantasy “independent of any correspondence with reality”, said Riviere. The objects in that complex are thus not the real father and mother, but their imagos. In a later developmental stage these imagos are “transferred” to the real parents. The same is true for the superego – it is a fantasy, according to Riviere, “founded on identification which to begin with had no moral implications”.¹⁶⁶ These first fantasies and identifications have a narcissistic character, that is to say, the first fantasy is the fantasy of being good (in the meaning of omnipotent) morally, materially and sexually whereby the child identifies itself with the first parent imagos – they are the ones who are omnipotent. This fantasy remains unattainable and what first frustrates the child are the sexual fantasies. They are not prohibited, but simply unattainable. A sense of guilt springs from this initial frustration that Riviere defined as the “introjection of the fact of frustration of the sexual fantasies”. In other words, the sense of guilt does not emanate from “actual threats or prohibitions, or moral or ethical injunctions”, but from the fact that these fantasies are intolerable.¹⁶⁷ When the imagos are linked with the actual parents a prohibiting morality is able to more exactly determine the initial formation of morality, superego and the sense of guilt.

Not only Klein, but also Ernest Jones and Susan Isaacs were mentioned by Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents*.¹⁶⁸ In a 1926 article Jones had written about the genesis of the superego.¹⁶⁹ His article was actually an exegesis of Freud's *The Ego and the Id*. According to Jones, the most important characteristic of the superego was criticising and inflicting pain upon the ego. Put another way, the functioning of the superego was paired with the sense of guilt and/or the need for punishment. He believed that the genesis of the superego was determined by two factors, namely the desire for a certain love object and the desire to be loved. Both desires are inevitably frustrated either by the mother or by the father for the simple reason that neither can be fulfilled. That frustration leads to hate towards whoever

¹⁶⁴ M. Klein, “Early Stages of the Oedipus Complex”.

¹⁶⁵ J. Riviere, “Symposium on Child Analysis”, in *The Inner World and Joan Riviere. Collected Papers 1920-1958*, A. Hughes (ed.), Karnac Books, London, New York, 1991, pp.80-87.

¹⁶⁶ Idem, p.84.

¹⁶⁷ Idem, pp.85-86.

¹⁶⁸ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.138.

¹⁶⁹ E. Jones, “The Origin and Structure of the Super-Ego”, in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 7 (1926), pp.303-311.

caused it and in a subsequent developmental stage the superego applies that hate to the child's own ego. In this train of thought Jones made no distinction between an actively prohibiting or punishing parent and one who does not supply the desired satisfaction of the child's needs. Both are experienced by the child as frustration.

In a subsequent article Jones went a step further.¹⁷⁰ He explicitly argued that every privation can be seen as a frustration. In Freud's vision it was clear that the desire for the love object would be thwarted by an external source, usually the father. Things are different with the desire to be loved – this desire too is thwarted when the desire, love or need for satisfaction is not satisfied. For the child this is not an experience of frustration, but of privation. In Jones' vision frustration is now equated with privation. He argued that the analysis of boys and girls taught that “children are not permitted any sexual gratification”. After all, the child is expected to be asexual and to postpone its sexual expression. This is experienced as a prohibition. Every privation of sexual enjoyment is thus also a frustration. Little boys' castration anxiety is now merely a form of expression of the threatening prohibition of sexual enjoyment (incest prohibition). Girls must choose between giving up the father as a love object (incest prohibition) or giving up the desire for a penis (penis envy). Both options confront the little girl with privation. Jones subsequently argued for the use of the term “aphanisis”, a term that expressed a threat of “the permanent extinction of sexual pleasure”. From these ideas he proposed that “privation alone may be an adequate cause for the genesis of guilt”. This sense of guilt “is as it were artificially built up for the purpose of protecting the child from the stress of privation, i.e., of ungratified libido”.¹⁷¹ In other words, the sense of guilt stems from a pre-Oedipal dynamic without external influence and it has in fact the character of a fear signal of the threatening danger of aphanisis and the restraining effect on the associated desires which cannot find satisfaction. Jones himself went a step further when he wrote that every prohibition by a parent is probably a projection by the child – there is no actual prohibition by the parents. In conclusion, “guilt arises rather from within as a defence against this situation than as an imposition from without, though the child exploits any *moralisches Entgegenkommen* in the outer world”.¹⁷² An actual prohibition by the parents is seized upon by the child in order to reinforce an already extant sense of guilt.

Susan Isaacs relied heavily on Jones and attempted to reconcile his ideas with those of Klein and Riviere.¹⁷³ Her idea was that if she could do this then it would also reconcile Klein's and Freud's ideas regarding the genesis of the superego and the sense of guilt as well. She first demonstrated that Freud and Klein differed regarding the genesis of the superego and the sense of guilt. Freud assumed that

¹⁷⁰ E. Jones, “The Early Development of Female Sexuality”, in *Papers on Psycho-Analysis*, Baillière, London, 1950, pp.438-451.

¹⁷¹ Idem, pp.440-442.

¹⁷² Idem, p.450.

¹⁷³ S. Isaacs, “Privation and Guilt”, in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 10 (1929), pp.335-347.

there must have been a real threat of castration; Klein proceeds from the assumption that the initial formations of the superego and the sense of guilt stem from frustrated desires. Isaacs' compromise was that in earliest childhood the parents "set conditions to the continuance of their love; there is real frustration, as distinct from privation".¹⁷⁴ Yet the sense of guilt in its entirety cannot be traced back to this real threat of the loss of love. Parents do not just forbid and are not just severe, but are also caring and sympathetic. In addition to these early real frustrations there is also the child's fantasy and desires which are irrevocably stopped by real impossibilities. For Isaacs it is clear that this is in principle the most determinative factor: "underlying the real moral element (...) are the fundamental privations".¹⁷⁵ According to Isaacs, Jones was right when he argued that privation is the same as frustration (by parents), but that is indeed a secondary development whereby two original elements go together – the original privation is not a prohibition, but a disruption of the assimilation of that which satisfies needs (the mother's breast, for example). Isaacs put this succinctly: "I haven't got what I want" becomes "You deny me". The connection between these two (privation and frustration) runs according to the following juvenile logic – the child wants what another has (the mother's breast), aggressively tries to get it but is confronted with the fact that it does not get what it wants. The child sees this as punishment by the mother for its aggressivity. Thus according to Isaacs, the earliest sense of guilt must be seen as the reaction to frustration, as punishment for the desire to own what the child aggressively claims from another (specifically the mother). The child feels guilty because of its aggression. Only in the second stage of development is this sense of guilt linked to real, prohibiting parents. Isaacs' conclusion is that the sense of guilt is unavoidable because it stems from "developmental processes in the child" and thus not "from accidental circumstances or faulty education".¹⁷⁶

In 1929 Jones also sought a compromise between Freud and Klein.¹⁷⁷ He agreed with Klein's idea that the genesis of the superego can be traced back to the child's sadism generated when its sexual desires were not satisfied. The first sense of guilt can be seen as a restraining reaction – sadism makes the danger of frustration and loss of love greater. The sense of guilt dams sadism up thus protecting against that frustration or loss of love. Jones made an important adjustment, however – strictly speaking there is no discussion of a sense of guilt because there is no true understanding of morality, good or evil. He wrote then also of a "pre-ferocious" (meaning pre-moral) "stage of guilt".¹⁷⁸ Only during subsequent development when the child encounters prohibitions laid down by the parents (the father) can a real sense of guilt arise. Jones thus concurred with Klein's argument regarding fantasy, sadism and frustration, but he simultaneously attempted to

¹⁷⁴ Idem, p.342.

¹⁷⁵ Idem, p.343.

¹⁷⁶ Idem, p.347.

¹⁷⁷ E. Jones, "Fear, Guilt and Hate", in *Papers on Psycho-Analysis*, pp.304-319.

¹⁷⁸ Idem, p.309.

preserve Freud's emphasis on the Oedipus complex as the crucial moment in the development of conscience and the sense of guilt, thus weakening the stand he had taken two years earlier. Yet it is clear that on the crucial point Jones concurred with Klein – in its inner life the child is first confronted with privation and only in a subsequent developmental stage are the related feelings (hate, sense of guilt, fear) linked with an external frustration. It was indeed a revelation when Freud discovered that every fear, every sense of guilt and every hatred was ultimately bound to one's parents, but "we are beginning to see that even these very early attitudes themselves have a pre-history".¹⁷⁹

As early as in *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud reacted in particular to Jones's ideas. When Freud wrote that the sense of guilt was the designation for the tension between the ego and the superego, he also made clear that one can only speak of a sense of guilt when there is an understanding of good and evil, an understanding that is an external influence which must be internalized. One can also only speak of punishment when there is an understanding of good and evil and in addition that evil cannot remain hidden. As a prelude to that sense of guilt he saw the fear of the loss of love. His point was that the superego and thus also the actual sense of guilt only arise when an external authority is internalized.

For Freud the positions taken by Klein, Riviere, Jones and Isaacs were extraordinarily problematic. Even the attempts at compromise proceeded from the assumption that the imagined "privation" was more fundamental for the sense of guilt and the conscience than real "frustration". And therein lies the crux of the problem. In the debate with Jung, Freud's answer in *Totem and Taboo* was the actual primal murder and his answer in the case of the Wolf Man was the actual primal scene. The Oedipus complex, the genesis of the superego and the sense of guilt were for Freud inextricably linked to actual experiences in childhood and concrete threats and prohibitions. The Rat Man was forbidden from biting the maid; the Wolf Man was forbidden to masturbate by his nanny. At the same time, Freud also saw that Klein and Riviere had made important discoveries. After all, they emphasized that a difference existed between the strictness of a person's conscience and the actual strictness of that person's parents. Klein and Riviere explained the difference using the theory of the fantasy – the child identifies first with imagos and then later with the actual parents. The difference between the strictness of the conscience and the actual strictness of the parents can be explained by the difference between phantasmatic imago (and the frustrations which can come with that) and the actual parents. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud gave his explanation for the difference – the strictness of the conscience is first and foremost based upon the actual strictness of the parents, but that strictness is subsequently reinforced by every new repression of aggression.

We can now also understand why Freud insisted in *Civilization and Its Discontents* and in his correspondence with Jones on linking the sense of guilt

¹⁷⁹ Idem, p.317.

with aggression towards real people and the death instinct which underlies it. He could not accept the idea that the sense of guilt stemmed from a dearth of sexual satisfaction. Aggression must be directed against a real authority, one that forbids and frustrates. He clearly also needed to cling to ideas about the strictness of the upbringing, as he had noted in his earliest analyses and confirmed in later ones. When Isaacs noted that parents are not only strict but also caring and sympathetic, she represented a younger generation.

Thus *Civilization and Its Discontents* is not only a synthesis of ideas about individual development and culture, but also a reaction to new discussions within psychoanalysis. Freud was the point of departure for a new generation, but it was clear that the analysis of children, as practised by Klein and the others, produced material which fundamentally called his theories into question. This theoretical discussion gnawed at Freud. He wrote as much in short notes dated 1938: "A sense of guilt also originates from unsatisfied love. Like hate."¹⁸⁰ This indicates that he was seeking to work the ideas of Klein, Jones and others into his own theories, and was willing to question his ideas on real frustration and the death drive.

Klein and the others differed from Freud regarding the genesis of the Oedipus complex, conscience and the sense of guilt. In his debate with Jones, Klein and Isaacs in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud emphasized the issue of the sense of guilt. He sought to hold on to five core ideas: (1) the sense of guilt does not stem from a random dearth of need satisfaction; (2) the sense of guilt is always related to aggression; (3) the sense of guilt is always the effect of the internalization of an external moral factor; (4) conscience and the sense of guilt are not based on an inner (phantasmatic) dynamic, but are founded in the first real relations with one's parents; (5) the strictness of the conscience and the strength of the sense of guilt are based upon the actual strictness of the parent(s) and the subsequent lasting repression of aggression.

As a sixth core idea we could add that he sought to keep the Oedipus complex central. It was exactly that, however, that gave rise to the next problem which had to be cleared up. After all, Freud had always strongly emphasized that complex with little boys. In the course of time he had worked out how the Oedipus complex applied to girls, but it remained a derivative of the male complex and thus the female Oedipus complex remained under-researched. It awaited further clarification. During the 1920s Freud made castration anxiety the core moment of the Oedipus complex thus increasing the importance of fundamentally analysing the female Oedipus complex. One question now became inescapable – can girls really have castration anxiety? The theoretical necessity of clarifying the female Oedipus complex paralleled the rise of the new generation of analysts who were busy with the analysis of children, including a large number of girls. It is thus also no surprise that the debate regarding conscience and the sense of guilt was

¹⁸⁰ S. Freud, "Findings, Ideas, Problems", *SE XXIII*, p.300.

inextricably linked with ideas regarding the Oedipus complex and that the debate in *Civilization and Its Discontents* naturally overflowed into the debate on the female Oedipus complex, just as Freud put forward in *Female Sexuality* (1931). We can even go a step further – the debate regarding the female Oedipus complex was essentially about the genesis of the superego and the sense of guilt.¹⁸¹

Until the 1920s Freud laid full emphasis on the male Oedipus complex – the little boy has his mother as love object and wishes his father were out of the way. The female complex is simply the reverse – the girl has her father as love object and wishes her mother out of the way. He found complicating factors, however. The first of these is the primacy of the phallus in the genital organization of the small child and the allied castration complex which he had made central in *The Infantile Genital Organization* (1923). The problem was, girls do not have a penis.¹⁸² In *The Dissolution of the Oedipus complex* (1924) it appeared he had modified his theory on the female Oedipus complex, although it remained a derivative of the male complex. In that essay he proposed that the girl quickly discovers (as soon as she sees a little boy's genitals) that she does not have a penis. She subsequently accepts castration as a given fact.¹⁸³ Thus no castration anxiety arises. Yet this also eliminates a powerful motive for the construction of the superego. Actually, Freud wrote, the desire for the father continues in the desire to have a child by him and this takes place gradually because that wish will never be fulfilled. In addition, the girl has less strong sadistic tendencies. Her superego forms gradually and is less strict, but he did add that these ideas were “unsatisfactory, incomplete and vague”.¹⁸⁴ From this perspective it is not so strange that Klein and others who analysed young girls and laid great emphasis on sadism and aggression, focused on the problem of the formation of the superego. After all, if the girl did have strong aggressive tendencies, then a gradual attrition of desire is no longer obvious and the less strict conscience, as Freud described it here, is no longer acceptable. In short, after *The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex* Klein and the others had reason to adjust Freud's theories.

It had been in 1925 that Freud had made his first attempt to better describe the female Oedipus complex. In *Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes* he added a complicating factor to the female Oedipus complex – the small child first has its mother as its love object. That the father was the love object for the girl must then be explained.¹⁸⁵ He proceeded

¹⁸¹ On the debate on female sexuality see, E. Roith, *The Riddle of Freud. Jewish Influences on his Theory of Female Sexuality*, Tavistock, London, New York, 1987; P. Gay, *Freud*, pp.501-522; T. Geyskens, *Never Remembered*, pp.136-153; Ph. van Haute, P. Verhaeghe, *Voorbij Oedipus?*, part II.

¹⁸² S. Freud, *The Infantile Genital Organization: An Interpolation into the Theory of Sexuality*, SE XIX, p.142, pp.144-145.

¹⁸³ S. Freud, *The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex*, p.178.

¹⁸⁴ *Idem*, p.179.

¹⁸⁵ S. Freud, *Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes*, SE XIX, p.251.

from the discovery of the lack of a penis and the consequent penis envy. The little girl sees what she does not have and wants it. This penis envy has a number of direct consequences – the girl pretends she is a man and develops an inferiority complex. This is the source from which female jealousy develops. There is another consequence – the girl holds the mother responsible for her lack of a penis and her love relations with her are thereby injured. But the most important consequence of penis envy is indeed that this serves as a counterforce to masturbation.¹⁸⁶ Freud did not specify the exact reason for this, but the effect is that the girl's less frequent masturbation leads from manliness to femininity. Gradually the girl "slips into a new position" (Freud uses the German verb *gleiten*, to glide) giving up her desire for a penis in favour of the desire for a child.¹⁸⁷ In order for that to happen, the father is chosen as the love object. In conclusion he noted that the castration complex in girls preceded the Oedipus complex. In boys they coincide.¹⁸⁸ For girls this means that the Oedipus complex is gradually conquered and does not need to be suddenly repressed. Girls' superego is thus "never so inexorable, so impersonal, so independent of its emotional origins as we require it to be in men".¹⁸⁹ At the end of this article he admitted that he had not explained everything, but with reference to Abraham, Horney and Deutsch, he stated his argument powerfully.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Idem, p.255.

¹⁸⁷ Idem, p.256.

¹⁸⁸ Freud put it in a formula: "Whereas in boys the Oedipus complex is destroyed by the castration complex, in girls it is made possible and led up to by the castration complex." Idem.

¹⁸⁹ Idem, p.257.

¹⁹⁰ Freud saw himself as a binding factor between these authors. That is remarkable because Abraham, whose 1921 article on the female castration complex (K. Abraham, "Äußerungen des weiblichen Katrationskomplexes", in *Psychoanalytische Schriften II*, pp.69-99) can be seen as the direct predecessor to Freud's new insights, was seriously criticised by Horney. In her 1923 article "On the Genesis of the Castration Complex in Women" she disputed not so much Abraham's idea that penis envy is determinate for girls' castration complex, but the idea that nothing more than an anatomical deficiency is determinate for the female Oedipal conflict and its outcome. It is in particular analysis of the sense of guilt which produced the thesis that these feelings not only have their origins in Oedipal reproaches by the father, but are also rooted in a pre-Oedipal identification and rivalry with the mother and the associated fantasy of union with the father. Horney saw this fantasy as an ontogenetic repetition of the phylogenetic experience that in primitive times women were men's sexual property. A sense of guilt is subsequently the effect of pre-Oedipal, incestuous desires which were not satisfied and thus were able to become a source of hate. Horney was the first (in 1923) to indicate the importance of pre-Oedipal fantasies as the source for the sense of guilt. (Horney's reconstruction of the pre-Oedipal fantasies and the irreversible experience of "privation" led to the conclusion "that being a woman is in itself felt to be culpable".) Her work thus preceded the ideas of Klein and others, as described above. On Karen Horney see, B.J. Paris, *Karen Horney. A Psychoanalyst's Search for Self-Understanding*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1999, pp.65-74. Helene Deutsch did not see Horney's ideas as a fundamental critique of Abraham, but as an important supplement. She emphasized that for male analysts female sexuality was more difficult to understand than for female analysts – the problem with Abraham's (and Freud's) findings was thus not that they saw women as castrated men, but that they were incapable of approaching women from any perspective other than that of a man. In fact Deutsch expresses here in 1925 what Freud in 1931 would endorse, namely that female analysts were in a better position to clarify female sexuality. H. Deutsch, *Psychoanalyse der weiblichen Sexualfunktionen*, Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna, Zurich, 1925, pp.3-22.

Female sexual development remained intriguing and frustrating. In particular Horney maintained that girls' development could not be seen as the working through of a lack with regard to boys. She continued to challenge Freud to approach female sexuality in another way. Yet "everything we know about early female developments seems to me unsatisfactory and uncertain", Freud wrote in 1928.¹⁹¹ The female Oedipus complex and the genesis of the female superego and sense of guilt remained mysterious. He repeated that uncertainty in *Female Sexuality*. The question here is also how the girl exchanges love objects in favour of the Oedipus complex. He had to recognize that this pre-Oedipal development in women "gains an importance which we have not attributed to it hitherto", that it was a brilliant archaeological find, but that this issue was also "difficult to grasp" and "grey".¹⁹² He himself admitted that the analysis of the Oedipus complex up to that point had indeed largely been done from a male perspective and indicated that female analysts were probably more capable of clarifying female sexuality. Yet while he made no reference to Horney's critical ideas, he did mention the most loyal of his female followers at that time – Lampl-De Groot, Ruth Mack Brunswick and Deutsch.¹⁹³

Although Freud called upon his faithful followers, he was primarily reacting to Klein when he wrote that he had achieved new insight into the libidinous relationship of young girls to their mothers, that in earliest childhood this relationship is exceptionally strong but that it can later be shaped by fear and aggression. This aggression manifests itself in the many curtailments (prohibitions) the mother imposes upon the little girl. Via the paranoid projection mechanism the little girl subsequently develops a fear of the hostile mother.¹⁹⁴ This new insight is remarkable because he had earlier assumed that the hostility toward the mother was an expression of the Oedipus complex. Now that hostility was conceived of as part of pre-Oedipal development.¹⁹⁵

In addition to the attachment to the mother, there remains the hostility regarding the father which is experienced as interference with the little girl's relationship with the love object. This is the same situation for little girls and little boys. Freud now assumed that the boy's initial attitude toward his mother must also be ambivalent, but it never becomes hostile because the father is *the* target of animosity. The question now was naturally why girls' and boys' development separates. Why are little boys able to overcome their hostility toward their mother and why is little girls' hostility toward their mother so determinative? The idea

¹⁹¹ S. Freud, E. Jones, *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones*, p.641.

¹⁹² S. Freud, *Female Sexuality*. SE XXI, p.226.

¹⁹³ Idem, pp.226-227.

¹⁹⁴ Idem, p.227.

¹⁹⁵ In the lecture "Femininity" Freud wrote: "We get an expression that we cannot understand women unless we appreciate this phase of their pre-Oedipus attachment to their mother". S. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures*, p.119. Compare, S. Freud, *Female Sexuality*, p.230.

that each strong fixation eventually declines naturally was not satisfactory. After all, little boys continue to have their mothers as their love object. According to Freud, little girls have various reasons to turn away from their mothers and take their fathers as love objects – the curtailments which the mother imposes (such as forbidding masturbation), sibling jealousy, and the fact that the child does not have exclusive possession of her mother.¹⁹⁶ Yet the decisive difference with little boys is indeed that the little girl reproaches her mother for having been born a girl (without a penis). Thus it is the pre-Oedipal female castration complex that is *the* determinative factor in the turning away from the mother in favour of the father.¹⁹⁷

This new insight of Freud's regarding female development eventually led to a return to the issue of the genesis of the superego and the sense of guilt. After all, he himself had assumed the pre-Oedipal hostility of little girls (and boys) and we know that this hostility forms the basis for the creation of the superego and sense of guilt. Did the recognition of this hostility now also mean recognition of the pre-Oedipal form of conscience and the sense of guilt? In other words, was Freud letting himself be influenced by Klein and the others?

After the clear position regarding the pre-Oedipal hostility of girls toward their mothers, doubts were again raised. Freud wanted to avoid an in-depth explanation of the genesis of the superego and the sense of guilt, stopping only briefly to examine the most important points of agreement with the conclusions reached by others and the most important departures from those points. He once again chose not to debate with Klein and the others directly, but to do so via a loyal follower, Lampl-De Groot.¹⁹⁸ In 1927 she published an article on the female Oedipus complex to which Freud now reacted.

Lampl-de Groot took Freud's uncertainty regarding female sexuality as her point of departure and posed the question of how little girls come to surrender their mothers as love objects.¹⁹⁹ Following Freud, she proposed that anatomical differences were central. The realization that she, like her mother, has no penis leads the little girl to surrender her mother as love object and identify with her. The father, who is originally treated as a hostile rival, now becomes the new love object. Choosing him as a love object appears to simply resolve the original hostility. It is exactly at this point that Freud formulated his criticism of Lampl-De Groot – the change of love object is not conceivable without hostility towards the mother. The core of the matter is not the idea of an anatomical isomorphism, but the little girl's aggressive reproach of her mother as being guilty of an anatomical fact.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Idem, p.231.

¹⁹⁷ Idem, p.234; S. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures*, p.124.

¹⁹⁸ S. Freud, *Female Sexuality*, p.241.

¹⁹⁹ J. Lampl-De Groot, "The Evolution of the Oedipus Complex in Women", *Man and Mind: Collected Papers of Jeanne Lampl-De Groot*, International Universities Press, New York, 1985, pp.1-11.

²⁰⁰ S. Freud, *Female Sexuality*, p.241.

Freud referred to an article by Deutsch from 1930 on masochism in women. In this article she emphasized penis envy and masturbation in little girls.²⁰¹ She noted that penis envy and masturbation have an aggressive character and that this sadism appears to be a decisive factor for the origin of the sense of guilt. In addition, there is still the aggressive reproach of the mother who is held responsible for the lack of a penis. This second factor is more important for the development of a typically female, passive, masochistic disposition. Female masochism is chiefly an expression of the “anatomical fate” of having been castrated. Deutsch then returns to the sense of guilt – in women the sense of guilt is strongly allied to a masochistic attitude which bears a strong resemblance to what Freud called moral masochism. She thus retained Freud’s central constructions regarding sadistic impulses and the sense of guilt.

Freud used the theme of hostility toward the mother as a way to connect with the discoveries made by Klein and others.²⁰² Yet according to him, this hostility was not the pre-Oedipal source of a premature or prenefarious superego and sense of guilt. The hostility towards the mother, having grown strong, highlights the ingress into the Oedipal conflict. In addition, that hostility comes about simultaneously – the little girl is fixated upon her mother for a long time. This also means that his insights were incompatible with the idea that the earliest start of the Oedipus complex can be recognized as early as the second year of life. He thus fully emphasized the development of hostility toward the mother based on an originally affectionate bond. The superego and the sense of guilt can be formed out of that hostility after the development of the normal Oedipus complex.

In contrast to Horney and Jones (who in “The Early Development of Female Sexuality” had made the case for Horney’s views), Freud held onto the idea that little girls’ penis envy is more determinative than the perception of her own sexual organs.²⁰³ The reason for this is actually that in the pre-Oedipal relationship of the little girl with her mother he emphasized the ambivalent feelings regarding the mother. In short, just as little boys’ ambivalent relationships with their father is determinative, the same is true of little girls’ relationships with their mother. By emphasizing this ambivalence, Freud was also able to underscore the importance of identification for it is only possible based upon those ambivalent feelings of love and hate. With reference to Jones’s article²⁰⁴, it is finally clear that the discussion of the female Oedipus complex was essentially a continuation of the debate regarding the genesis of the superego and the sense of guilt.

²⁰¹ H. Deutsch, “The Significance of Masochism in the Mental Life of Women, in R. Fliess (ed.), *The Psychoanalytic Reader. An Anthology of Essential Papers with Critical Introductions*, Hogarth Press, London, 1950, pp.195-207.

²⁰² S. Freud, *Female Sexuality*, pp.240-243.

²⁰³ Idem, p.243. On Freud and Karen Horney see S. Quinn, *A mind of her own. The Life of Karen Horney*, MacMillan, London, 1987, pp.205-241.

²⁰⁴ S. Freud, *Female Sexuality*, p.243.

8.14 Considerations

The final great debate Freud had with his followers shows that he was attempting to defend the psychoanalytic canon he had developed. We must state here that this defence was ponderous – the little girl’s development remained derived from that of the little boy and is founded on a number of “primal scenes” that have to be linked and associated in the little girl’s mental life. The Wolf Man had a singular primal scene, but a little girl must discover that some people have a penis and others have babies. The little girl must combine these two insights and convert them into an end result. Every possible critique of Freud’s use of actual childhood experiences is here doubly valid.

Freud was clearly not satisfied with his solution to a “grey” area such as the female Oedipus complex. It says much that at the end of his life he continued to write that the sense of guilt also stems from unsatisfied love, thus from privation. More important to this study is why he did not want to embrace Klein’s and Jones’s positions, why the clinician Freud would not allow himself to be convinced by new clinical material. His position can be explained against the background of the scope of this study – the sense of guilt. The theme of the sense of guilt was not central to the reflections on culture which, in turn, were the result of the theory-building regarding obsessional neuroses. The relationship must be understood as exactly the reverse of this. Via the analysis of the sense of guilt he discovered the Oedipus complex and the repressed hostile wishes of the little boy towards his father. In the following step, he anchored the Oedipus complex in a “piece of historical reality” and thus not in fantasy or imagination. Subsequently the theme of identification and the formation of the conscience was also linked to this complex. In short, the analysis of the sense of guilt, which had been an important focus since Freud’s early clinical writings on neurosis, had delivered many insights which eventually became part of the core of Freudian thought. That the sense of guilt was a crucial undercurrent for the formation of cultures and religions then only confirmed and enlarged the importance of this theme. Klein, Jones and others defended insights which extracted the sense of guilt from an actual historical experience and from young boys’ Oedipus complex. That Freud here reacted with doubt and rejection is understandable – the sense of guilt is inextricably linked with the most important insights psychoanalysis had produced. This is why the debate regarding female sexuality was so fundamental and also so problematic.

The London school’s attention to female sexuality, the sense of guilt and conscience generated fundamental critiques of Freud’s thought. He certainly saw things this way himself and it is not surprising that after the synthesizing *Civilization and Its Discontents*, in which clinical and cultural insights were definitively linked, that female sexuality was, remained, and perhaps could only remain a “dark continent”.

Chapter 9

Great men

9.1 Introduction

When Freud wrote *Civilization and Its Discontents* he was already well past seventy. The last major debate (with Klein, *inter alia*) resulted in fact in a repetition of standpoints he had taken earlier. The interest in pre-Oedipal developments (in girls) did not result in new clinical research. We could almost say the opposite – he began to concentrate on “great men”, religious leaders in whom he had long been interested. The time for debate was over. The old psychologists with whom he had debated in his earliest work, people like Krafft-Ebing and Ellis, were long dead. Even most of his earliest followers had died or broken with him. The most recent generation of psychoanalysts was going its own way.

The last decade of Freud’s life was mainly devoted to repetitions and further elaborations of ideas he had worked out earlier. The most important theoretical treatises of these years, for example *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, are all characterized by this.¹ A second group of texts are about analysis and treatment (especially *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*) and these too largely restate older ideas, albeit with a more explicitly tragic tone.² Even *Why War?* mostly consists of repetitions of findings on the death drive, aggression and cultural development, and can largely be regarded as an abstract of *Civilization and Its Discontents*. It was written as an answer to an open letter from Albert Einstein to Freud, whereby Einstein’s question is clear – how is it possible that people in modern society can still be driven to the madness of violence and destruction? What is particularly noticeable here is that Freud combined a “pessimistic” view on human destructiveness with the utopian hope that others would also become pacifists, just like “us”.³ By calling himself a pacifist he was siding with the great names of the time.⁴ What is of course also clear is that his pacifism must be seen against a background of emerging Fascism and Nazism in Europe. The 1930s were years when anti-Semitism began to become much more systematic. Freud’s books, and those of other psychoanalysts, did not escape the organized book-burnings in

¹ The first two parts of *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* are a compacted version of Freud’s main psychoanalytic ideas reaching back to *Project for a Scientific Psychology*. The most important new theoretical idea is presented in the third part of the text and concerns “the splitting of the ego” which Freud now not only regarded as a characteristic of psychosis, but also of the neuroses. This issue of “splitting” seems to have been inspired by Klein and her thoughts on projection in the pre-Oedipal stage, but we should bear in mind here that Freud was primarily concerned with the splitting of the ego whereas Klein discusses the splitting of the object (for example, good breast vs bad breast). On this issue see J.-M. Quinodoz, *Reading Freud*, pp.250-253.

² P. Gay, *Freud*, p.615.

³ S. Freud, *Why War?*, pp.213-215.

⁴ H. Vermorel, M. Vermorel, *Sigmund Freud et Romain Rolland*, pp.370-374.

Germany. This threatening period ended for him with flight to London, shortly before he died. Seen against this background, it is thus hardly surprising that at this period in particular he began to spend a lot of time working on Jewish identity (in relation to anti-Semitism). These reflections resulted in *Moses and Monotheism*, on which Freud worked for five years and which was published in 1939. It consists of three volumes, the first of which appeared in *Imago* in early 1937 and the second at the end of the same year. The third and by far the largest volume was published in 1939 (in Amsterdam), together with the first two volumes. It was Freud's last great work and is the main theme of this chapter.⁵

9.2 *Moses the Egyptian*

Freud and some of his followers had expressed interest in Moses earlier. These followers focussed on the heroic characteristics of Moses.⁶ Theodor Reik, for example, had applied Freud's ideas from *Totem and Taboo* on the totem meal, the hate of the primal father and the sense of guilt to Judaism. He presented Moses as a mythical hero, a rebellious figure battling with God. This figure represented a piece of primitive mythical religion in Jewish monotheism.⁷ Thus, Judaism was no exception to the general lines of development in religion Freud had already depicted.⁸ Yet, according to Reik, some questions remained to be answered. What psychic factors had caused the sense of guilt of the Jewish people to develop a strict monotheism? And what psychic factors could explain the Jewish belief in being a chosen people?⁹ In *Moses and Monotheism* Freud formulated answers to these questions.

For Freud, however, Moses was not merely a mythical hero representing the primitive prehistory of Judaism. On the contrary, Freud's interest in Moses can

⁵ The text consists of three parts. The first two were written in 1937. The third part starts with two prefatory notes (written in Vienna and London in 1938). Idem, pp.54-58. What follows is the first part of the second version of the manuscript from 1938 (pp.59-104). Then the first version of the manuscript from 1934 is inserted (pp.105-130). The final pages are then the second part of the second version (130-137). On the complex genesis of *Moses and Monotheism* and an analysis of the amalgam of "versions" the final text holds see I. Grubrich-Simitis, *Freuds Moses-Studie als Tagtraum. Ein biographischer Essay*, Verlag Internationale Psychoanalyse, Weinheim, 1991, pp.79-103; A.F.M. Mampuy, *De ik-splijting van de man Mozes en de inscheuring van zijn ik. Een commentaar bij Freuds Mozes-werk, zijn ik-splijtingstekst en de Wolfmanscasus*, Groningen, 1997.

⁶ For example K. Abraham, *Traum und Mythos*, pp.302-304; O. Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, pp.15-18.

⁷ Th. Reik, *The Psychological Problems of Religion I. Ritual. Psycho-Analytic Studies*, Farrar, Straus and Company, New York, 1946, pp.305-361.

⁸ We should note here that Reik's application of *Totem and Taboo* to Judaism seemed to fill a lacuna – Freud had not discussed Judaism in *Totem and Taboo*, yet he had stressed the primitive core of Christianity.

⁹ Idem, pp.360-361. On discussions on Moses in the psychoanalytic movement see H. Westerink, "De mythische held of de man Mozes?"; H. Westerink, "Zum Verhältnis von Psychoanalyse und Mythologie".

also be traced back to a number of other factors. The first has already been mentioned – reflections about Moses were reflections about Jewish identity against a background of rising anti-Semitism and a threatening world. A second reason to study Moses was that he was the founder of a religion. Freud's interest in the founders of religions can be traced back at least to *Group Psychology and Civilization and Its Discontents*. It is reasonable to assume that he now wanted to study such a founder of cultural morals in more detail. A third reason for studying Moses was a personal one – he had long been fascinated by this figure.

In a 1935 letter, Freud set out what would be the core of his first treatise on the man Moses as an Egyptian. He wrote in this letter that the question of who Moses was, the figure who was the key to understanding the Jewish character, had occupied him all his life.¹⁰ Freud had indeed long been interested in Moses. This was particularly clear from Freud's fascination with Michelangelo's statue of Moses in Rome. He first saw it in 1901 and thereafter visited it regularly. It is clear that the fascination was for Moses and not so much for Michelangelo. The product of this fascination was *The Moses of Michelangelo*. One of the underlying questions here too is who Moses actually was. According to Freud, Michelangelo had not depicted Moses as the short-tempered man who beat an Egyptian to death and smashed the stone tablets in a fit of rage, but as the man who succeeded in bringing something "more than human" (*Übermenschliches*) about, something that is one of man's greatest achievements, namely the control of one's own drives for the greater good of a higher goal.¹¹ This element of the renunciation of aggression had already been linked to Moses by Freud via a reference to the apostle Paul in *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices*.¹²

The fact that in the 1930s Freud again became mesmerized by Moses can be linked not only to a personal fascination, but must also be placed against the background of an interest in the founders of religions, an ongoing discussion in the psychoanalytic movement of religion, Judaism and the figure of Moses and a reflection on Jewish identity against a background of increasing anti-Semitism. What is remarkable in this context is Freud's reference to James Henry Breasted's *The Dawn of Conscience* from 1934.¹³ A central theme in this book about the

¹⁰ S. Freud, L. Andreas-Salomé, *Briefwechsel*, p.224. On Freud's personal fascination for Moses in relation to his own Jewish background and identity, and *Moses and Monotheism* as auto-analytical exercise see, for example, I. Grubrich-Simitis, *Freuds Moses-Studie als Tagtraum*; Y.H. Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses. Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1991; A.F.M. Mampuy, *De ik-splijting van de man Mozes en de inscheuring van zijn ik*; H. Stroeken, "Freuds 'De man Mozes en de monotheïstische religie' als autoanalytische exercitie", in *Tijdschrift voor Psychoanalyse* 7 (2001/1), pp.24-34; S. Heine, *Grundlagen der Religionspsychologie*, pp.166-178; F. Maciejewski, *Der Moses des Sigmund Freud. Ein unheimlicher Bruder*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2006.

¹¹ S. Freud, *The Moses of Michelangelo, SE XIII*, pp.229-234. See also, H. Westerink, "De mythische held of de man Mozes?", pp.7-8.

¹² S. Freud, *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices*, p.127.

¹³ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, pp.8-9, pp.21-24; J.H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, London, 1934.

cradle of the development of morality and conscience in Western culture (the Middle East) is the question of the place of the people of Israel in this tradition. Breasted saw Israel as a channel for older moral traditions, such as that of the great empires of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Asia Minor. He made clear in his foreword that this train of thought was by no means an anti-Semitic one. Thus Breasted made a link between historical research into the meaning of the Jewish people for the “advance of man toward new visions of character and social idealism” in the Western world and the current identity of that people.¹⁴ There is a second reason why this book by Breasted is interesting – Freud’s reference to this book reveals that once again, in *Moses and Monotheism* too, the genesis and development of morality and conscience (and thus also the sense of guilt) has taken central stage. In addition, the book by Breasted is also a reflection on the human tendency towards destruction. He put forward that our primitive ancestors were unmoral savages, the human expression of this for tens of thousands of years was the art of making weapons, whereby the development of the moral sense is virtually still in the starting blocks by comparison. Primitive destructive forces can thus still be released, whereas the development of a conscience is actually intended to master these forces.¹⁵ Thus in Breasted Freud discovered a new confirmation of ideas he expressed in *Civilization and Its Discontents* and of his arguments against the London school – there is a link between destructive tendencies and the formation of conscience and morality.

Incidentally, in Breasted that morality is not anchored in a historical moment, as was the case with Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, but rather in the gradual development of customs and legislation. Certain individuals have boosted important developments. In the Egyptian tradition he pointed mainly to Akhenaton, and with the Jewish tradition Moses is the key figure par excellence, a leader who was able to merge the Egyptian and Midianite traditions and thus teach the people morality (the Ten Commandments).¹⁶ Finally, he also pointed out that the evolution of the conscience still had a long way to go and that its completion would probably mean that traditional (thus also religious) convictions would have to make way for new insights.¹⁷ In short, with Breasted we meet themes that touch on the themes of Freud’s great cultural studies, *Totem and Taboo*, *The Future of an Illusion* and *Civilization and Its Discontents*. This is the line in which *Moses and Monotheism* can be placed.

The question concerning the identity of Moses, who Freud assumed was a historical figure around whom myths and legends had grown up, starts with the matter of the name.¹⁸ It seems unlikely that Moses is a Hebrew name – the

¹⁴ Idem, pp.xv-xvii.

¹⁵ Idem, Introduction, chapter I.

¹⁶ Idem, pp.349ff.

¹⁷ Idem, pp.419-420.

¹⁸ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, pp.7ff.

explanation of the name (Exodus 2:10) is not correct and it is also unlikely that an Egyptian princess would have given a Hebrew name to the child she found. What is more likely is that the name is derived from the Egyptian “mose”, which means “child”. However, this does not mean that Moses was Egyptian.

The contribution to this theme was Rank’s *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*. Rank assumed that every prominent culture idolized its national heroes in myth, legend and saga. Birth stories were particularly strongly mythologized.¹⁹ The most important thing Freud wanted to adopt from here was the thought that two families play a role in the myth – the important family to whom the hero is born and the subservient family in which the hero grows up. The birth myth around Moses does not fit this structure, however.²⁰ Moses was born in a poor Jewish family and then grew up at the Egyptian court. According to Rank, the myth was adapted later and an earlier myth did in fact fit the general model. This was too speculative for Freud to follow and he did not think the differences between the Moses myth and the general model were sufficiently explained by later adaptations to the model. The differences are based on historical facts.²¹

So for Freud there was a real family to whom Moses was born and there was the later mythologization. From an analysis of the relationship between the two Freud came to the hypothesis that Moses was an Egyptian prince around whom the Jewish people had spun a myth. The hero Moses was thus not the mythical representative of some form of primitive Judaism, but an Egyptian prince who threw in his lot with the Jewish slaves.²² Freud could not yet support his hypothesis with real arguments. The only argument was a generality – behind every legend, myth or saga hides a kernel of historical truth. This latter argument was particularly characteristic of his interest in the true facts behind the stories. That Moses was an Egyptian prince is a hypothesis that arises from the idea that a piece of repressed actual history is hiding behind the phenomenon. In other words, he was concerned with the reconstruction of a specific primal scene, in this instance also as a reply to Rank.²³

9.3 Akhenaton and monotheism

Moses, the liberator and legislator of the Jewish people, was an Egyptian. For the time being this remained a hypothesis. “If Moses was an Egyptian”, then it is at first sight hard to imagine he would have lowered himself to the level of

¹⁹ See 4.2.

²⁰ Idem, pp.10-13.

²¹ The tenor of Freud’s discussion of Rank was that the latter’s work was not only extremely speculative, but that he had also tried to formulate a primal myth as a model, thereby underemphasizing the differences between myths.

²² S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, pp.14-16.

²³ As in his critique of Jung, Freud emphasized in his discussion of Rank the problem with applying a general interpretation scheme to various stories and figures in different religious contexts.

associating with a formerly enslaved people.²⁴ On the other hand, it also seems unlikely that the Jewish people would have adopted the legislation and religion of a strange Egyptian. The hypothesis appears too problematic, but Freud pointed out that there was a possibility that the Jewish religion really did spring from the Egyptian. If Moses really lived, he would have been a contemporary of Amenhotep IV, also known as Akhenaton, a pharaoh who during his reign introduced a form of monotheism.²⁵

The interest in Akhenaton was nothing new in the circle around Freud. In 1912 Abraham had published on this pharaoh in *Imago*.²⁶ He emphasized the subconscious attitude of Amenhotep towards his parents as the core complex through which his monotheism can be approached – he saw himself as the son of Aton and introduced a religious system wherein that god was the only god. This religious attitude was accompanied by a change in name (from Amenhotep to Akhenaton) and with struggles against the god Amun and the removal of everything to do with that god, including the name of his father Amenhotep III. To Abraham it was clear that Akhenaton worshipped the Aton as an idealized father. He then pointed out that this god Aton has many similarities with Yahweh – a god that is impersonal (Akhenaton announced a ban on statues), free of passions, whims and hate; a god of peace and not war. And so, according to the conclusion, the Aton religion was a precursor of Mosaic legislation.²⁷ He even went a step further by stating that this Aton religion also contained the kernel that would be preserved in Christianity. Despite this advanced development, Akhenaton's monotheism was not a success. Akhenaton imposed his religious reforms too rigorously and thus came into conflict with the religious perceptions of the people. His lot is a sad one – after his death a counter-revolution was instigated. He may have had a small group of supporters and worshippers, but in fact he stood alone.

Freud related Akhenaton's story and came to a conclusion close to that of Abraham – Akhenaton was surrounded by a small group of sympathizers and if Moses was an Egyptian, he would have been one of them. He then went further with an argument that the Jewish religion in essence can be traced back to Akhenaton's monotheism.²⁸ The similarities already begin with the names of the two gods – Aton and Adonai. Freud thought that he could find an argument in Arthur Weigall in support of the idea that the name Adonai was derived from Aton.²⁹ Weigall, however, was actually arguing the opposite – the introduction of

²⁴ Idem, p.18.

²⁵ Idem, pp.20ff.

²⁶ K. Abraham, "Amenhotep IV (Echnaton). Psychoanalytische Beiträge zum Verständnis seiner Persönlichkeit und des monotheistischen Aton-Kultes", in *Psychoanalytische Schriften II*, pp.329-359. Although Freud never referred to this article directly, it is significant that in *Moses and Monotheism* he called upon the same literature on Akhenaton as Abraham.

²⁷ Idem, p.344.

²⁸ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.24.

²⁹ Idem, p.25.

Aton in Egypt was the introduction of a foreign, namely Syrian, element. In his view Akhenaton's monotheism did not continue in Judaism but in Christianity.³⁰

Another similarity between Judaism and the Akhenaton religion apparently lay in the denial of an afterlife – Akhenaton challenged the worship of other gods and thus also the belief in an afterlife; the Jewish religion continued in this line. Once again Freud referred to Weigall³¹ and once again that reference is rather strange – according to the latter, the Akhenaton religion did believe in a life after death, but there was no belief in hell.³² Circumcision, which was apparently introduced to the Jewish people by Moses, also apparently has an Egyptian origin.³³

According to Freud, these arguments all point in one direction – Moses was definitely an Egyptian. He was a high-ranking supporter of Akhenaton. After the death of Akhenaton he lost his position during the counter-revolution. His solution was to found a new empire with a new people: “These he chose to be his new people – a historic decision”.³⁴ He became the leader of a collection of Semitic tribes, the future Jewish people.

Freud continued to repeat that this reconstruction was not only hypothetical and speculative but would remain so. In fact we have seen that Freud borrowed his thesis from the literature – he is extremely selective when collecting his arguments. Yet there was one fact that stood out for him – Jewish monotheism was derived from the Egyptian religion and Moses was the key figure. The main problem, however, was that these core thoughts did not seem to be in agreement with other new insights into Jewish history and the origin of Jewish monotheism. In 1906 the historian Eduard Meyer had claimed that the Jewish religion had known a founding moment.³⁵ He localized that event in Meriba-Kadesh, an area to the south of Israel. That was where the Jewish tribes adopted the worship of a Midianite god, the worship of the volcano god Yahweh. According to Meyer, this volcano god had the character of a terrifying demon. For him, too, Moses was the founder of Jewish monotheism. He was not an Egyptian but a Midianite, probably a miracle-worker of low social status. Freud saw it as his duty to resolve the problem of linking these two different origin stories. What is remarkable is that he now no longer referred to Breasted, despite his having linked the Egyptian Moses and the Midianite Moses with each other in *The Dawn of Conscience*. Moses had grown up in Egypt, but at a certain moment he entered the desert and learned of

³⁰ A. Weigall, *The Life and Times of Akhnaton, Pharaoh of Egypt*, Thornton Butterworth, London, 1923, p.15, p.250.

³¹ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.24.

³² A. Weigall, *The Life and Times of Akhnaton*, pp.120-123.

³³ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, pp.26-27.

³⁴ Idem, p.28. This choice by Moses is the primal deed from which the later Jewish belief in being the chosen people stems. H. Westerink, “Zum Verhältnis von Psychoanalyse und Mythologie”, pp.306-308.

³⁵ Idem, pp.33ff; E. Meyer, *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbärstämme. Alttestamentische Untersuchungen*, Max Niemeyer Verlag, Halle, 1906, notably pp.46-71.

Yahweh from the Midianites. Breasted even thought that the Israelites exchanged their polytheism for monotheism under the influence of Moses, but concluded that this change implied a stronger motive than the influence of their great leader. He found that motive in an eruption of Mount Sinai, whereby Yahweh demonstrated his power.³⁶ Freud definitely knew about Breasted's theory but merely pointed out that Mount Sinai was not a volcano and thus the motive could not be sought there. In what follows below, it will turn out that Freud saw another link between the Egyptian and the Midianite traditions.

9.4 *The Kadesh compromise*

Freud now called upon Ernst Sellin, who had written on the meaning of Moses for the religion of the Israelites.³⁷ Referring to, *inter alia*, Meyer, Sellin posed a simple key question: who is Moses? Sellin took the book of Hosea as his line of approach. His findings were that in the early history of the Jewish people there had been an exodus from Egypt and that subsequently in the desert (near Mount Sinai) a religious community was created from the merging of different tribes. He saw Moses as the leader of the exodus. Sellin's most important finding, however, was that Moses was murdered by his own people.³⁸ With this discovery, Freud now had all the pieces of the puzzle needed for a reconstruction.

According to Freud, Moses was an Egyptian who took the Aton religion, monotheism and circumcision from Egypt into the desert.³⁹ There at a certain moment he was murdered by his own people. In the desert, specifically near the place Kadesh, unification took place of related tribes who worshipped Yahweh, among other gods, under the leadership of a Midianite priest. This unification, which took place over a period of several generations, bears the character of a

³⁶ J.H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, pp.350-352.

³⁷ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, pp.36-37; E. Sellin, *Mose und seine Bedeutung für die israelitisch-jüdische Religionsgeschichte*, Deichertsche Verlag, Leipzig, 1922. On Freud and Sellin see J. van Ruiten, P. Vandermeersch, "Psychoanalyse en historisch-kritische exegese: de actualiteit van Freud's boek over Mozes", in *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 34 (1994/3), pp.269-291.

³⁸ The question remains whether Freud had first met this view in Sellin – further on in *Moses and Monotheism* he indicated that Goethe, too, had accepted the murder of Moses. S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.89; H. Politzer, *Freud und das Tragische*, p.173.

³⁹ Idem, pp.47ff. Already in 1935 Freud gave an outline of the central line of thought on Moses in a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé. S. Freud, L. Andreas-Salomé, *Briefwechsel*, pp.222-224. Freud wrote that not Yahweh but Moses was the liberator, religious founder and legislator. His idea was that the character of Yahweh was mainly determined by events concerning Moses and not the other way round. According to Freud, the Jews had murdered Moses. This murder was repressed, but it is exactly in religion where again and again we see the "return of the repressed". The repressed (Moses' god) returns in the character of Yahweh. Seen in this light, Freud's interest in Moses fit what had always interested him in psychoanalysis – something had been repressed and whatever it was returned as complaints and symptoms, in dreams, in compulsive actions and fears, et cetera. In other words, something happened in the past which made its mark on the character of somebody in the here and now.

compromise – Yahweh now became the sole god who could only be addressed by the name Adonai. Circumcision was adopted from Egypt and the morally higher cultural level of the Egyptian group became a determining influence in Jewish legislation. Monotheism in these early days was still very underdeveloped; Yahweh was still basically a violent volcano god among the gods.

That compromise now formed the basis for reinterpreting history; it had been Yahweh who had delivered the people from Egypt. Thanks to the sense of guilt of some of the people about the murder of Moses, the anonymous priest-founder was later given the name of Moses. In short, the Egyptian Moses was never in Kadesh and did not know Yahweh and the Midianite Moses never knew Moses and was never in Egypt.⁴⁰

Freud's reconstruction, and he was well aware of this, was open to criticism. After all, the Bible has few or no passages which could support this reconstruction. He thus paid a lot of attention as well to the later reinterpretation of the past: that Yahweh freed the people, that Yahweh demanded circumcision from his people, that the patriarchs knew Yahweh already, that it was not Kadesh but the Sinai where the revelation took place. According to Freud, the aim of all these stories was to disguise the true course of events.⁴¹ Thus it was hardly surprising that there was no direct support for his reconstruction. For Freud, the most important consequence of this was that during the course of history and the reinterpretation of the past, the god Yahweh gradually moved further and further away from his Midianite origins and increasingly adopted the identity of the god of the Egyptian Moses.⁴²

The most important historical fact that was obscured was the murder of Moses.⁴³ In Freud's view (in 1938) this Egyptian Moses was a despot who forced a new religion on the people and ruled them with a rod of iron. Moses's monotheism was unacceptable to the fleeing group, just as Akhenaton's religion had been unacceptable. The group rose up and killed the "tyrant".⁴⁴ Once at this point primal history repeated itself, just as Freud had described it in *Totem and Taboo*: the primal father (Moses) was murdered and the sons (the people) were remorseful.

⁴⁰ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.48, p.52; S. Freud, L. Andreas-Salomé, *Briefwechsel*, p.223. This reconstruction of Judaism based on two traditions and two religious leaders enabled Freud to reconstruct Jewish monotheism without associating primitive religious elements (polytheism, mythic heroes) with the Egyptian Moses.

⁴¹ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.47.

⁴² Idem, p.50.

⁴³ Robert Paul has reformulated (and defended) Freud's thoughts on the importance of the murder in Jewish history. According to Paul, the Torah exemplifies an obsessional style of thought that can be interpreted as a composition against unconscious sense of guilt. This unconscious sense of guilt is in the heart of Judaism (and Christianity). It is transmitted in sociocultural systems organized around a shared fantasy (myth) – the Oedipal murder of Pharaoh by Moses – and intersects with individual unconscious guilt feelings. Because of this the Torah is still a dominant cultural symbol instilling both the fantasy and the sense of guilt, thus inciting to the commitment to moral values, social solidarity and the acceptance of the other's otherness. R.A. Paul, *Moses and Civilization. The Meaning Behind Freud's Myth*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1996.

⁴⁴ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.47.

The reinterpretation of history provided the opportunity to deny this painful event. However, the reinterpretation did not stop at a denial. The god Yahweh, an angry, violent local god, slowly but surely acquired the character of Moses's spiritualized god, loving and omnipotent. In short, the teaching that had been rejected by the murder of Moses eventually turned out to be the strongest. Freud saw this development as a final victory of the god of Moses over the volcano god Yahweh. It was primarily the Levites (descendants of the Egyptian group) and the prophets who were behind this development.⁴⁵

For Freud this was the most important result of the reconstruction – in the religious history of Judaism Yahweh increasingly acquired the character of the god introduced by Moses from Egypt. The compromise between the two groups (from Egypt and from the region of Midian) concerning their own origins and the identity of the god linked to them evolved over a long period of time. Two moments of religious foundation were merged in that development: the foundation by the Egyptian Moses was first repressed by the Midianite foundation but eventually emerged as victorious. And the two foundings are linked to two founders who are also merged by tradition. How the Egyptian tradition eventually gained the upper hand over the Midianite had still to be explained, but it appeared to be automatically linked to the murder of Moses and the remorse about that.

Thus Freud had reconstructed an even greater primal scene hiding behind a long process of assimilation and concealment in stories wherein an original detail gradually gained the upper hand, i.e. the traumatic murder of Moses and a subsequent period of the foundation of a new religion. That period determined the religious history of the Jewish people. The meaning of that “one great man”⁴⁶ was thus mainly determined by reactions and developments after his death.

9.5 *What is a great man?*

The third part of the Moses book is a concentration on and an explanation of the significance of the murdered leader Moses for the religious history of the Jewish people. What makes reading this part difficult is that it is in fact an amalgam of two versions written in 1934 and 1938.

⁴⁵ Idem, p.51.

⁴⁶ Idem, pp.107-111. Grubrich-Simitis (and others following her interpretation) has stressed the fact that Freud called Moses a “great man” and identified with him. It should be noted here that Freud referred to Moses as a “great man” only in the first version (1934) of the manuscript, a version that was later integrated in the third part of the tripartite book. Idem, pp.105-130. In this first version Freud presented a positive picture of Moses. However, in the first two parts of the final text (1937) and in the second version of the manuscript (1938) Freud depicted Moses as a primal father. This meant a change in identification. It was no longer Moses but the apostle Paul who was identified with (see further on in this chapter). On this issue see H. Westerink, “The Great Man from Tarsus: Freud on the Apostle Paul”, in *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 76 (2007/1), pp.217-235 (231-234).

He started this third part with an extensive summary in which he emphasized Moses's fate and that of his followers as well as asked why the murder of Moses did not mean the end of his significance.⁴⁷ For Freud it was a fact that the monotheistic cult founded by Akhenaton had been brought with Moses, but that at first it was the underdog in the compromise of Kadesh in which the violent god Yahweh emerged victorious. Freud saw in these events the most central development in Judaism: "the central fact of the development of the Jewish religion was that in the course of time the God Yahweh lost his own characteristics and grew more and more to resemble the old god of Moses, the Aton".⁴⁸ The people's many bitter experiences in fact supported this movement – the god who, after all, had chosen the Jewish people and led them out of Egypt to freedom would also eventually lead the people to the happiness he had promised. Whenever that fact was doubted, "they increased their own sense of guilt", so that eventually even the most melancholy lot still fit into God's plans for salvation.⁴⁹ Thus Freud regarded the sense of guilt in particular as the driving force behind the development from the Yahweh to the Aton character of God. With regard to religion, this meant the importance of "the Mosaic ideals" – an absolute monotheism, the rejection of magical ceremonies and a clearly emphasized strict morality.⁵⁰ Hence, Freud argued in the 1934 version, Moses imprinted certain "traits" upon the Jewish people, traits that can be grouped under the heading "advancement in intellectuality", character traits ("decisiveness of thought", "strength of will", "energy of action", "autonomy and independence"⁵¹) of the Jewish people that developed over a period of time through an ongoing identification with Moses.⁵²

This advancement in intellectuality "consists in deciding against direct sense-perception in favour of what are known as the higher intellectual processes".⁵³ This is the main characteristic of the Mosaic identity of the Jewish people, and indeed, this advancement in intellectuality that is now ascribed to the Jews was already associated with Moses as early as Freud's analysis of the Michelangelo statue. Then he wrote about the "more than human" Moses representation that it was the expression of "the highest mental achievement that is possible in a man, that of struggling successfully against an inward passion for the sake of a cause to which he has devoted himself".⁵⁴ In *Moses and Monotheism* he related this

⁴⁷ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, pp.59ff.

⁴⁸ Idem, p.63. In the first version of the Moses manuscript from 1934 Freud did not emphasize the change in characteristics from Yahweh to Aton, but stressed that "Moses may have introduced traits of his own personality into the character of his God – such as his wrathful temper and his relentlessness". Idem, p.110.

⁴⁹ Idem, p.64.

⁵⁰ Idem.

⁵¹ Idem, pp.109-110.

⁵² Idem, pp.106-115, Ph. Rieff, *The Mind of the Moralist*, p.311.

⁵³ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.117.

⁵⁴ S. Freud, *The Moses of Michelangelo*, p.233.

advancement (or achievement) to sublimation, yet again Freud failed to depict this mechanism.⁵⁵

For Freud, no theory that regarded monotheism as a system developing naturally from polytheism in advanced cultures could explain why Judaism became monotheistic. Even biblical (priestly) historiography itself could not explain this supposed development. After all, this historiography was by definition regarded as a reinterpretation and cloaking of what had really happened. In order to be able to understand this gradual development into monotheism Freud now called upon an old idea in his work – the latency period. In individual lives, like in cultural developments, a period of internal conflict and doubt can often precede the embracing of a new concept. The example was the incubation (latent) period between a traumatic event and the development of a symptom. This clinical fact formed the basis for Freud's search for the development of the Moses character in the Jewish religion.⁵⁶

The murder of Moses had been repressed, but the symptom through which that which is repressed returns had not yet evolved; in individual life, we meet latency in the development of an individual, the period between the repression and the return of an experience and the compulsively logical manner in which that experience recurs. Once again Freud was testing an old methodology – the analogy between (obsessional) neuroses and cultural phenomena (morality and/or religion).⁵⁷ He was also repeating old positions when he stated that neuroses can be derived from traumatic experiences in childhood that are of a sexual and/or aggressive nature, and that these experiences have subsequently been forgotten. He then continued along the lines of earlier thoughts about the compulsion to repeat and the defence – the traumatic experience compulsively forces itself onto the consciousness, and vice versa it is known that the ego defends itself against this repetition. It thus followed that obsessional neurotic symptoms have the character of a compromise between the urge to repeat and defence, but usually only emerge after a period of latency.

What is noticeable here is that *Moses and Monotheism* was not only a return to the fascination for the figure of Moses from the time of *Totem and Taboo*, but now also to *Totem and Taboo* itself and the period preceding it when Freud was studying obsessional neurosis in particular. That he was now emphasizing the latency period to such a degree may perhaps be seen as a reaction to an excessive interest in pre-Oedipal development phases in previous years, but it is nevertheless mainly a new appreciation of a concept that had already been given its place in

⁵⁵ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.86. See also, A. Vergote, *De sublimatie*, pp.202-224; S. Heine, *Grundlagen der Religionspsychologie*, pp.171-173.

⁵⁶ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, pp.66ff.

⁵⁷ Idem, pp.72ff.

Three Essays.⁵⁸ During the latency period there was a period when the first curbs to sexual drives were given shape through disgust, shame and aesthetic and moral codes. This was also the period wherein the early sexual goals could be sublimated. Freud had not paid much attention to this period since *Three Essays*; he regarded it as an intermediate period between the period when sexuality played a leading role (early childhood rounded off with the dissolution of the Oedipus complex) and the following period (puberty). That character also has a latency period in *Moses and Monotheism* – a relatively quiet period without disturbances.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, he said, it is of significant importance for the genesis of a neurosis, obsessional or otherwise.

The concept of the latency period only became important again now because Freud was looking for an analogy for the period between the repression of the murder of Moses and the inevitable reappearance of Mosaic characteristics in Jewish religion. We have of course seen that he had already applied the model of the obsessional neurosis in *Totem and Taboo*, but as yet without the element of latency. The murder of the primal father meant an immediate sense of guilt which resulted in the creation of commands and prohibitions. Then there was no question of a latency period. When he now began to apply these thoughts to Judaism, that long period turned out to have been present there as well and that therefore meant an adaptation of *Totem and Taboo* with the benefit of hindsight. According to Freud, this latency period in history could be called “tradition” indicating the transmission of historic material orally (as opposed to written records). Hence the disavowed memories were in fact never lost but “persisted in traditions which survived among the people” and eventually “would end in a written record”.⁶⁰ It was this latency period that both “illuminated and obscured” what he would call the “historic truth” of Judaism and Jewish identity – the past (primal) events that eventually return into memory.⁶¹

Freud now referred to his theory of the primal murder by the sons of the primal father as a “condensed” history. In actual fact it was not a single murder that had taken place, instead there was a period of thousands of years in the history of mankind wherein the banishment of the sons by the father and the resultant patricide repeated itself on innumerable occasions.⁶² After the murder there followed a long time when the brothers struggled with each other for their father’s position until, after a period of time, they realised that this struggle would lead to nothing other than danger to themselves. At the same time, they began to remember the companionability of the time around the patricides. These two developments during the latency period resulted in the emergence of the first forms of social

⁵⁸ S. Freud, *Three Essay*, pp.176-179.

⁵⁹ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.77.

⁶⁰ Idem, p.69.

⁶¹ Idem, p.32, pp.127-130. Compare also S. Freud, *Constructions in Analysis, SE XXIII*, pp.267-269.

⁶² S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.81.

organization, characterized by a denial of libido, mutual responsibilities and the first sacred institutions, in short, “the beginnings of morality and justice”.⁶³ This is also the period when totemism, the first manifestation of religion, began to take shape. What follows is a long development over time from totemism to monotheism.⁶⁴

In this reinterpretation of primal and religious history, which now took place over thousands of years, the most important shift was that from true fact and its immediate impact to gradual development. Freud still accepted the primal murder, but the sense of guilt and its influence on later developments was now much more related to the period of latency, of tradition. We could put it this way – what is latent in the latency period is the sense of guilt. It is a sense of guilt transmitted from generation to generation, but without being expressed in official written records. Instead of the Deed and its immediate effects Freud thus stressed tradition as illuminating and obscuring primal events. Hence, Deed became a more abstract “truth” wrapped in delusions, a “shadowy ‘original sin’”.⁶⁵

For Freud the core of the reinterpretation of *Totem and Taboo* was clear – in the development of religion, what it is all about is “on the one hand fixations to the ancient history of the family history and survivals of it, and on the other hand revivals of the past and returns, after long intervals, of what has been forgotten”.⁶⁶ This latter element had, he now thought, not been done justice in *Totem and Taboo* and now appeared with regard to the history of Jewish religion to be of crucial importance for the emergence of strict monotheism and the Mosaic character of Yahweh.

⁶³ Idem, p.82. The period after the primal murders was primarily characterized by shifts in power relationships, mutual limitations and social organization. The re-emergence of what had been repressed only slowly got underway in the most primitive forms of religion. In fact, Freud here seems to have been emphasizing to a much greater degree an element we have often encountered – the social contract and the transition from egoism to altruism. The renunciation of instinct, recognition of mutual obligations and social institutions are fanned by the sense of guilt. We have also seen that a necessary altruism meant that the individual perceived that he could benefit from loving and being loved. This element was now also included in the discussion – the sons create social institutions because they perceive that they are in danger from mutual conflict and because they have strong mutual connections due to their joint memories of the murder.

⁶⁴ Idem, pp.80ff.

⁶⁵ Idem, p.130, p.135. From another angle, too, the immediate impact and significance of the primal murder seems to be put into perspective. In a letter from Freud to Rolland from 1936, known as *A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis*, sense of guilt is also discussed. Freud described how in 1904 he and his brother travelled to Athens full of expectations, but nevertheless failed to enjoy the view of the Acropolis. When he tried to find the reason behind this lack of pleasure thirty-two years later, he ended up at the sense of guilt. Now, however, it is no longer the sense of guilt for the murderous feelings towards his father, as it had been in the time of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In the final paragraphs of the letter, he completely emphasized the desire to outdo his father: “it seems as though the essence of success was to have got further than one’s father, and as though to excel one’s father was still something forbidden”. Thus we are no longer dealing here with murderous thoughts towards the father, but rather with a triumph that simultaneously implies disdain. S. Freud, *A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis*, SE XXII, p.247.

⁶⁶ Idem, p.84.

The period of latency ends with the return of the repressed. According to Freud, “prehistoric tragedy insisted on being recognized”.⁶⁷ Here, therefore, is the element of the return of the traumatic, an urge that at a certain moment became stronger than the resistance to it. Freud saw only one explanation – “a growing sense of guilt”.⁶⁸ This answer was predictable from the point of view of *Totem and Taboo*, but what is surprising is the evidence proposed for the thought that a growing sense of guilt would result in a prehistoric father returning as the only almighty god. This evidence was the apostle Paul. “Paul seized upon this sense of guilt and traced it back correctly to its original source”. Expressed differently and in more detail, the best proof for the return of what had been repressed in Judaism is the history of the emergence of Christianity. The significance of one great man (Moses) was fathomed by another great man, Paul.

9.6 St Paul

Freud’s fascination with Moses is clear not only in *The Moses of Michelangelo*, but also – how could it be otherwise – in *Moses and Monotheism*.⁶⁹ Freud was preoccupied with Moses throughout his life and not without the ambivalent feelings linked with such a father figure. Moses was “the great man”, the founder of the Jewish religion, but he was also the “tyrant” who was not accepted by his people and was subsequently murdered. In addition, Moses was not actually a single historical figure. The name points to two founders – the murdered Moses and the anonymous Midianite priest who was the actual leader during the compromise of Kadesh. The significance of Moses was gradually teased out of the historical person, or persons. Naturally Moses had really existed, but Freud debunked much of what was ascribed to this figure – his Jewishness and virtually the entire leadership episode up to Canaan. These stories about this great man turned out to be mostly fiction.⁷⁰ Hence, the decisive significance of Moses was the role he played in tradition.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Idem, p.86.

⁶⁸ Idem.

⁶⁹ On Freud and Paul see A.F.M. Mampuy, *De ik-splijting van de man Mozes en de inscheuring in zijn ik*, pp.314-327; H. Westerink, “The Great Man from Tarsus”.

⁷⁰ Originally, Freud had wanted to give *Moses and Monotheism* a different title – *Der Mann Moses, ein historischer Roman* [The Man Moses: a Historical Novel]. That title emphasized the aspect of literary fiction much more strongly. E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 3, p.207.

⁷¹ Jan Assmann has rightfully argued that Moses was not addressed by Freud as “figure of history” but as “figure of memory”, i.e. the meaning of Moses lies not so much in his historic appearance and acts, but in his reappearance as a character ideal in tradition. J. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian. The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.), London, 1997, pp.10-11. Also, J.J. DiCenso, *The Other Freud*, pp.79-84.

Moses was a father figure not necessarily because he founded monotheism, because that was actually his spiritual father Akhenaton, but rather because he had created the Jews and their religion. He was not the exponent of a popular movement, but a man with enormous psychic and intellectual capabilities who was able to significantly influence a group of people. Moses the Egyptian was the father of the later intellectual elite (the Levites and also the individual prophets) of what later became his people. In turn, the Jews went through an impressive advancement in intellectuality characterized by high intellectual and moral standards. Although Moses may not have been Jewish, he introduced to Judaism what was good in the later Jewish character – intellectual and moral civilization.

But this advancement also has a shadowy effect. Part of that moral civilization and the Jewish character was the fact that the Jews have become what they have become – the object of anti-Semitic hate, a hate “that the Jews had drawn upon themselves”.⁷² This last comment reveals a not unimportant shift. In the period when Freud was working on *The Future of an Illusion* he regarded anti-Semitism mainly as an expression of the Christian accusation. *Moses and Monotheism* concentrates more strongly on the guilt brought onto the Jews by themselves. After all, the Kadesh compromise resulted in the Jews beginning to regard themselves as the chosen people, who could not help but attract the jealousy of others. In short, Moses’s monotheism is behind the fact that the Jews developed a high opinion of themselves and thus induced the jealousy of others. The murder of Moses is the reason why the Jews saddled themselves with a sense of guilt that would inevitably affect that “self-regard”.⁷³

It is also from this point of view that we must try to understand Freud’s fascination for the apostle Paul. Just as with Moses, this fascination had deep roots.⁷⁴ For example, in 1920 he wrote to Pfister in response to his article on the apostle: “I have always had a special sympathy for Paul as a genuinely Jewish character”.⁷⁵ For Freud, Paul was a Jew who realized – in fact this is actually an intellectual and even psychoanalytical realization – that the Jewish people were plagued by a sense of guilt, a “malaise” that could be related to a primal crime, an original sin. Thus Paul already had all the intuition Freud reconstructed in *Totem and Taboo* and in *Moses and Monotheism* – there had been a primal crime and

⁷² S. Freud, A. Zweig, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig*, p.102.

⁷³ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.117.

⁷⁴ St Paul is already quoted in *Obsessional Acts and Religious Practices*, as we have seen. In the period when he was working on *Totem and Taboo* and when his fascination for Moses was already apparent, Freud wrote a short article on Paul, “*Great is Diana of the Ephesians*”. In this text Freud suggested that Paul held a special position in the foundation of Christianity because after him, via John, the way to worshipping the mother goddess (i.e., Mary) was once again opened up. S. Freud, “*Great is Diana of the Ephesians*”, *SE XII*; H. Westerink, “The Great Man from Tarsus”, pp.221-223. In *Group Psychology* he called Paul a “great thinker” who thanks to his ode to love in the letter to the Corinthians can be listed alongside Plato and his vision on Eros. Idem, pp.223-225.

⁷⁵ S. Freud, O. Pfister, *Psychoanalysis and Faith*, p.76.

this was followed by a growing sense of guilt. In other words, Freud credited Paul with this discovery: “The reason we are so unhappy is that we have killed God the father.”⁷⁶ In the same way as he had set himself the task in *Civilization and its Discontents* to thematize this sense of guilt in order to lighten the load, so had Paul in the distant past already tried to relieve the Jews (and the heathens) of their malaise. Paul came to believe in Christ due to the insight that with his death the people had been freed of guilt: “We are freed from all guilt since one of us has sacrificed his life to absolve us”.⁷⁷

For Pfister, too, Paul was primarily a Jew. He summarized the Jewish character as characterized by a religious fear of God, a burning desire to compensate for low self-regard with conscious moral acts and a deep-felt sense of guilt.⁷⁸ For Pfister, Paul was a Jew who was entirely aware of his “sinfulness”, in other words, of the fact that Adam’s crime had introduced a guilt into the world which weighed down his descendents. According to Pfister, this all fitted into the Jewish tradition of the pursuit of overcoming this guilt. Paul thus also stood in this tradition when he emphasized that Christ died as a peace offering and thus achieved redemption from guilt.

In this brief description of the Jewish character in general and that of Paul in particular we have met the two elements that recur in Freud’s work – Paul was the person who recognized the Jews’ sense of guilt and who knew how to free them of it. For Pfister, too, Paul was more than just an exponent of a certain culture; he was an independent great man who was the actual founder of Christianity. Nevertheless, there are important differences between Pfister’s and Freud’s views on Paul. For Pfister, Paul was not only a genius, but primarily a neurotic, a man who was strongly aware of a sense of guilt behind which Pfister suspected a repressed sexual problem, and not the murder of Moses. A second important difference between Pfister and Freud is that the former paid a great deal of attention to Paul’s introduction to the Hellenistic way of thinking via the Tarsian philosophy schools. The moral dimensions of Paul’s character are Jewish to an important degree, but the intellectual dimension is primarily Hellenistic. This Hellenistic influence gave an important boost to Paul’s belief in the resurrection (an un-Jewish element that can be linked with mystery cults) and the emphasis on the love of one’s neighbour. Pfister thus emphasized that Paul’s thought processes were mainly influenced by the release from a fixation with Jewish laws through an ethical sublimation (and conversion).⁷⁹ For Freud, the relationship between universalism and Hellenism was exactly the reverse – once Christianity had jumped out of its Jewish framework, it also absorbed elements from other traditions. This tendency was the reason why

⁷⁶ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.135.

⁷⁷ Idem. On this issue see also, R.A. Paul, *Moses and Civilization*, pp.193ff.

⁷⁸ O. Pfister, “Die Entwicklung des Apostels Paulus. Eine religionsgeschichtliche und psychologische Skizze”, in *Imago* 6 (1920), pp.243-290 (244).

⁷⁹ Idem, p.290.

strict monotheism in Christianity was relaxed in favour of polytheistic elements – the Christian religion could not maintain the high, spiritual standards of Judaism.⁸⁰ This regression was also able to explain a great deal of anti-Semitism – under a thin layer of love of one’s neighbour is hidden a “barbarous polytheism”, and Christians actually react just like the ancient Amun priests to the new Akhenaton religion.⁸¹ The hatred of Jews is in fact a hatred of Christians in the sense that it represented a hate of monotheism and the fact that Christ and Paul were Jews.

Because Freud, unlike Pfister, saw Paul as a Jew and shifted every Hellenistic tendency to the period after Paul,⁸² Paul could eventually (in 1938) become what he was for Freud: the only truly great man in Judaism, the Jew who recognized the return of the repressed murder of Moses and tried to free the people from that sense of guilt by promising redemption. According to Freud, for Paul Christ was the returned murdered first Messiah, Moses, who was murdered again, but who also rose from the dead and vanquished guilt.⁸³ Thus for Freud Paul was the end of the latency period, the moment of return of the repressed and the necessary innovation of religion. It was Paul who broke with the belief that monotheism was exclusively Jewish and replaced the old father religion with a son religion, thus in a sense destroying Judaism.⁸⁴ Once arrived at this point, Freud again tackled anti-Semitism. Those Jews who could not recognize the return of what had been repressed, could not take the step Paul had taken, were regarded by the Christians as the murderers of God (Christ). This accusation was correct, in Freud’s opinion, because the Jews did not dare to accept the murder of Moses and thus took a “tragic guilt” upon themselves, from which they either could not or would not free themselves.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.88, p.136. Ernest Jones had already expressed similar views. Christianity is basically the product of a compromise between Judaism and heathen religions. Christian myths and the Madonna cult are expressions of this. Protestantism could then be regarded as an attempt to purify Christianity from heathen elements. E. Jones, “Eine psychoanalytische Studie über den Heiligen Geist”, in *Zur Psychoanalyse der christlichen Religion*, Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna, Zurich, 1928, pp.116-129.

⁸¹ Idem, p.91.

⁸² Compare S. Freud, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians”.

⁸³ Idem, p.89.

⁸⁴ Idem, p.88.

⁸⁵ Idem, p.87, p.136. It is worth noting that in the Moses text Freud regularly used the concepts “tragic” and “tragedy”. There are references in the parts about Paul to Greek tragedy (i.e., Oedipus) due to the guilt of the hero present there and to Goethe who, according to Freud, had also accepted that Moses had been murdered by the Jews. These associations make it likely that *Moses and Monotheism* should not only be regarded as an application of *Totem and Taboo*, but also of the “tragic” *Civilization and Its Discontents* to the Jewish character.

9.7 *The sense of guilt and the return of the repressed*

The history of Judaism and Christianity has several glorious and tragic moments. Moses the liberator is a glorious moment. Another is Paul. The first murder and its lasting legacy is tragic; it resulted in a sense of guilt, a “tragic guilt”. The developments after Paul are also tragic: the regression in Christianity, the lasting guilt on the part of the Jews. If Freud regarded himself as a liberator (from illusions), this took place under the tragic circumstances of increasing anti-Semitism and the flight to London. This sense of guilt, we can say, appeared to be more persistent than an innovation of culture and religion.

This liberation should actually be taken with a pinch of salt. Paul generated only a partial liberation as the Christian religion was eventually also guilt-ridden (see 7.5). The liberation in which Paul believed concentrated on the insight into the return of the repressed (the murder) and the possibility of atonement. In fact this is a clinical insight; Freud knew that patients could cling tenaciously to their sense of guilt. The negative therapeutic reaction had demonstrated this. That sense of guilt is apparently so deeply rooted that liberation from it is too optimistic a hope. The history of Judaism, as he described it in *Moses and Monotheism*, is thus actually a description of the development of the sense of guilt among the Jews. Their entire religious development was determined by this.

For one final time he made use of the analogy between obsessional neurosis and cultural development.⁸⁶ The fact that the sense of guilt could grow and become a determining factor in the return of the repressed could be understood from that neurosis. With an obsessional neurosis it is clear that a fantasy has been repressed but has not vanished. Although what has been repressed is excluded from consciousness by reaction formations, it continues to be insistent. It can return when (1) the reaction formation weakens, as in the case for example of sleep, (2) the repressed fantasy receives a “special reinforcement”, as for example happens during puberty with sexual fantasies, and (3) when new fantasies and recent experiences are reminiscent of the old fantasies.⁸⁷ In every case what has been repressed does not return unchanged. It is always influenced by the resistance. This thought process, which can be traced back to the time of the seduction theory (see 1.8), was now translated into the terms id, ego and superego.⁸⁸ The ego has always had the character of a compromise between the id and the outside world. This ego can repress, force fantasies back into the unconscious id. However, repressed fantasies will also return to the ego from the id. Given that the superego is also a representative of the id, this is even unavoidable. Once again, Freud remarked that the id not only consisted of individual drives and impressions, but

⁸⁶ Idem, pp.92ff. On this analogy see, R.A. Paul, “Freud’s Anthropology: A Reading of the “Cultural Books””, in E.E. Garcia, *Understanding Freud. The Man and His Ideas*, New York University Press, New York, London, pp.10-30 (24-29).

⁸⁷ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.95.

⁸⁸ Idem, p.97.

was also determined by an “ancient heritage”.⁸⁹ This heritage consists in “certain [innate] dispositions”, a reference to the theories of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck on the inheritance of psychic dispositions. Contrary to Lamarck, these dispositions are not active but reactive – they “react in a particular manner to certain excitations, impressions and stimuli”.⁹⁰ He added that these dispositions include “distinctions” as there are distinctions between individuals and species. The most important examples of such reactive patterns are linked with the Oedipus complex.⁹¹

This idea that hereditary material is passed down through a people as “memory-traces” is determinative for the assumption that this history runs concurrently with that of a neurotic. Just as a neurotic represses old impulses (sexual and aggressive) that nevertheless return from that repression, so too can a people repress a prehistoric tragedy that nevertheless returns to consciousness over the course of history. Just as in obsessional neurosis hostile feelings towards the father are repressed, in the history of every people the murder of the primal father is repressed. The question now is which circumstances ensured that this repressed fact could return in the Jewish people. The most important reason is that the murder of Moses not only released memories of the primal murder, but also fanned an already existing sense of guilt (due to that primal murder).⁹² Hence Freud used these ideas on the inheritance of psychic dispositions not only, as he called it, to bridge “the gulf between individual and group psychology”, but especially to relate the murder of Moses to primal patricide, i.e. to relate one speculative hypothesis to another. After all, the transmission of memory-traces had already been depicted more convincingly when Freud discussed tradition and the passing on of material that was not in the official written records. Here, the transmission of memory-traces was situated in a cultural field independent of inherited psychic dispositions.⁹³

⁸⁹ Idem, p.98.

⁹⁰ Idem. Compare also, S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.158. Freud’s Lamarckism in *Moses and Monotheism* has been much debated in literature since Yosef Yerushalmi’s critique on psycho-Lamarckism in Freud’s theory on tradition and memory-traces. The most important, and in my opinion convincing reactions to this critique have come from Jacques Derrida, Richard Bernstein and Jan Assmann who have all developed theories on the transmission of unconscious memory-traces in what Derrida describes as a cultural “archive”, Bernstein refers to as “tradition” and what Assmann has called “cultural memory”. Y.H. Yerushalmi, *Freud’s Moses*; J. Derrida, *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London, 1996; J. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*; R.J. Bernstein, *Freud and the Legacy of Moses*. On this issue see also, R.A. Paul, *Moses and Civilization*, pp.172-174.

⁹¹ S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.99. Freud had already prepared the way for this position in *The Interpretation of Dreams*; when seeing or reading *Oedipus Rex* there is a question of recognition and that is why this tragedy makes such an impression – the reader or viewer recognizes in himself the antipathy towards the father, the love of the mother and the guilt that this releases. In *Totem and Taboo*, the case of the Wolf Man, and *The Ego and the Id* Freud had also discussed phylogenetic material, as we have seen.

⁹² Idem, p.101.

⁹³ On this point I agree with the analyses of Freud’s thought on the transmission of tradition made by Derrida, Bernstein and Assmann.

As a result the sense of guilt takes central stage in the history of the Jewish people. The murder of Moses repeated the primal murder and the resultant strengthened sense of guilt then determined the character of the Jewish people and its institutions. That the primal murder could be repeated was a result of the fact that the murdered father had returned as an elevated father in the religion and thus remained present as a father. The ambivalence of the sons with regard to the father remained at the same time unchanged. That ambivalence had enabled the first murder and the elevation; it now enabled a new murder. It was this ambivalence of feeling that led the people at a certain moment to murder their leader (father). The effect of this murder is clear: “all that could come to light was a mighty reaction against it – a sense of guilt on account of that hostility, a bad conscience for having sinned against God and for not ceasing to sin”.⁹⁴ This is the basis on which the people embraced increasingly strict regulations. The moral “asceticism” at least created the illusion that the people were ethically more civilized than those surrounding them. Behind this illusion constantly lurked insistent “sins” and a reactionary sense of guilt that could not be soothed by increasingly strict regulations. They are rooted in the primal histories of the sons and the fathers – hated and loved, murdered and internalized as an authority turning into an increasingly strict superego (under the pressure of a growing sense of guilt) and finally returning to consciousness. Thus the murder of Moses, via a long period of a growing sense of guilt, briefly surfaces in Paul’s consciousness: “the dark traces of the past lurked in his mind, ready to break through into its more conscious regions”.⁹⁵ This single sentence sets wide-ranging links; naturally the thought referred to the dark traces of an ancient guilt in the tragedy *Oedipus Rex* as quoted in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, but also to the ancient guilt in *Totem and Taboo* as well as to the tragic element in *Civilization and Its Discontents*.⁹⁶

9.8 Assessments

After the debate with the London school, after the death of most of his friends and oldest followers and in a period when in Germany itself his work was being burned, Freud was in a certain sense once again forced into the position of the, in his own words, monomaniac he had been in the 1890s. Then *The Interpretation of Dreams* followed as the result of a self analysis. Nearly forty years later, the result was *Moses and Monotheism*, a reflection on Jewish identity and a hunt along the dark trace of the sense of guilt for an ancient crime, the murder of the “great man” and “tyrant”. In the second version of the third part of the manuscript (1938)

⁹⁴ Idem, p.134.

⁹⁵ Idem, p.87.

⁹⁶ The relation between tragedy (opera, drama), culture and religion was already suggested as early as 1905/1906 in *Psychopathic Characters on the Stage*. See 3.5.

Freud did not identify himself with that tyrant (as he had done in the first version) who selected a bunch of slaves to propagate the Akhenaton cult, but rather with the apostle Paul, whose intellectual capacities resulted in a brief “psychoanalytic” insight into the origin of the sense of guilt.

When we remember that the novel about Moses was strongly coloured by *Civilization and Its Discontents*, we can even go a step further. Tragedies had always been important (*Oedipus, Hamlet, Faust*), and now Freud’s own history had also become tragic, a tale of a sense of guilt that determined the character of an entire people and its fate throughout history, including a threatening future in Nazi Germany. Seen in this light, there are certainly arguments to support the following hypothesis – Freud also identified with his oldest hero, Goethe, and *Moses and Monotheism* was his Faustian novel. It was not for nothing that he stated that Goethe had also had the insight that Moses had been murdered by his own people.

It goes without saying that *Moses and Monotheism* was mainly the application of an old, tried and trusted method and of earlier theories. The most important hypotheses and mental leaps were determined by the analogy with the obsessional neurosis. The most important hypotheses were thus provided by *Totem and Taboo* and by older material from his followers (Rank, Abraham). Once again the sense of guilt takes central stage. The tragic inevitability of this was emphasized even more strongly than before – it formed the core of tradition and, as an unconscious sense of guilt, ready to be (re)activated. By emphasizing the latency period between the murder of Moses and the return of the repressed, the growing sense of guilt as the driving force behind an increasingly strict morality (and advancement in intellectuality) was stressed even more than in *Totem and Taboo*. In that text the sense of guilt had been an initial, determinative reaction resulting in the emergence of obedience on the part of the sons towards the dead father. The emphasis then lay on soothing the sense of guilt with that obedience and the instigation of taboos resulting in the categorical imperative. The Deed is put into perspective and with the introduction of the latency period in cultural and religious history the dark trace of the ancient guilt is fully emphasized.

Concluding considerations

The sense of guilt in Freud's oeuvre is a concept that describes the tension between bodily instinctual drives and morality. The existence of this tension is his oldest psychoanalytical observation. The analyses of this tension became his life's work.

We took *Carmen* as the starting point for his initial opposition of morality and passion, although then still linked to a belief in a refined, bourgeois morality. However after his first clinical experiences, it swiftly turned out that that refinement had its own problems. The symptom par excellence of this was the sense of guilt. What followed were the first analyses of the self-reproaches of hysterics. Based on these analyses Freud enquired into the origin of morality and the sense of guilt. Was the sense of guilt the effect of a morality learned during puberty or was that sense of guilt already created in very early childhood when the sexual drives were already fully functioning and being repressed? The latter turned out to be the case and therewith sense of guilt became the key to charting the earliest developments and mechanisms. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* this analysis resulted in the formulation of the Oedipus complex. From that moment the sense of guilt and the Oedipus complex became an inseparable duo. Although in his later work it appears as if the sense of guilt was being put forward as a secondary effect, and thus as proof of the Oedipus complex, the original relationship was the other way round: this complex was discovered as a result of the analyses of sense of guilt.

The problem of the sense of guilt is a determining theme in Freud's work that can fully or partly explain a number of shifts in his work. The first of these is from hysteria to obsessional neurosis, because that is where the sense of guilt and morality are so clearly present. The obsessional neurosis then became the clinical model for the application of psychoanalytical insights in his first great cultural studies. Obsessional neurosis also provided the model by which other pathologies, such as melancholia and masochism, could be approached. Freud also continued to emphasize the relationship between a boy and his father alongside this continued attention to obsessional neurosis. The origin of the sense of guilt and morality had to be sought in the earliest ambivalent feelings with regard to the father who was both lovingly admired as an example and hated because he frustrated wishes. It was through his analyses of this relationship between a boy and his father that Freud discovered the importance of identification. The theory of narcissism anchored that theme as an early stage of development. One of this study's conclusions is the link between a narcissistic self-regard and the rise of the "sense of guilt" concept. We have also seen in this context that at the moment when Freud discovered the importance of narcissism and identification, the sense of guilt was differentiated.

Another shift is the increasing attention paid to aggression. In the years when hysteria was being analysed the emphasis was on the role of sexual drives in

the aetiology of hysteria. When analysing obsessional neurosis, the aggressive component of the sexual urge is very noticeable. Gradually that aggression became more important and attention shifted to sadism, masochism, the aggression of the superego and the death drive. Eventually, in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud stated that the emergence of a sense of guilt was always linked to aggression towards a beloved parent. The insights gained from the analysis of the sense of guilt went on to form the central theme of Freudian thinking. Thus this sense of guilt has left a “dark trace” throughout his oeuvre.

That dark trace gradually acquired an increasingly tragic shape for Freud. In his earliest analyses of hysteria, he still appeared to be assuming that an individual was able to free himself from self-reproaches. However, as early as *The Interpretation of Dreams* the analysis of the sense of guilt led to tragedy (*Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet*). It led to a complex of circumstances, mechanisms and experiences in earliest childhood for which the Oedipus complex became the descriptive and summarizing model and whereby the sense of guilt appeared to be the inevitable conclusion (with the exception of perversion). That not only applied to individuals, but also to culture as a whole. It strengthened the idea that the sense of guilt was unavoidable and unsolvable, sometimes even growing. However, we would not be doing Freud justice if we stated that an optimistic vision was exchanged for a pessimistic one. After all, the sense of guilt had a purpose. It is a problem when it is excessive and overwhelming, when it encourages impossible responsibilities and commandments. Yet simultaneously the sense of guilt prevents individuals developing the character of the primal father and turning into *Übermenschen* who place their aggression at the service of their egoism. In other words, a certain amount of sense of guilt is needed to provide an individual with his own character, although that individuality always remains in the area of tension between excessive repression of drives (whereby the ego can become damaged) and submission to others (idealization) or on the other hand too strong a narcissism, whereby there is no question of an enrichment of the ego through identification with a specific other person.

The sense of guilt is unavoidable and that clearly comes to the fore in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. This line is continued in the analysis of the “tragedy” of the Jewish history in *Moses and Monotheism* where the emphasis was not only on the complete malaise or the negative (anti-Semitic) excesses of that sense of guilt, but also on the high moral and intellectual level of Judaism that is founded upon that same sense of guilt. The tragedy in both works is that a person cannot free himself from the forces that can make him deeply unhappy, but at the same time that is the only place where he can be happy.

Despite the wealth of ideas about the sense of guilt in the late cultural studies, Freud was and remains primarily a clinician. We have seen that the shift in attention from hysteria to obsessional neurosis was determined by the attention to the sense of guilt and morality. We have also been able to see how the analyses

of the sense of guilt played a role in the determination of the various pathologies in relation to each other. Obsessional neurosis and hysteria were determined by a sense of guilt and an unconscious sense of guilt, melancholy by self-reproach, masochism by the need for punishment. The root of all these variations of the sense of guilt was a conflict between ambivalent feelings of love and hate towards beloved persons. Yet the analysis of the sense of guilt also led to the definition of what was clinically still demonstrable. The pairing of love and hate in people could be clinically analysed; the origin of love and hate as such fell outside this. The most remarkable problem in this context was the negative therapeutic reaction and the existence of the death drive. The theory about the death drive is actually an effect of the impossibility of completely deriving the sense of guilt from Oedipal relationships. After all, in these relationships already existing feelings of hate and love were linked to people, but Freud suspected that part of that hate could also exist independently. It is that destructive power that became visible in the negative therapeutic reaction. In short, the analysis of the sense of guilt enabled Freud to differentiate different pathologies in relation to each other, but that same analysis automatically reached the limitations of that clinical insight. Clinical insight compelled him to continue to link the sense of guilt to the Oedipus complex and this is why he opposed both Rank and Klein, both of whom wanted to derive the sense of guilt from pre-Oedipal developments. After all, Freud's patients always spoke of love and hate in relationships with others, for which the Oedipus complex is the primal model. Anything other than this complex remained speculative and "dumb".

Freud was virtually always in debate. It was typical that in *Three Essays* he so clearly opposed the fables of his time and in later years remained a critic of a society that considered itself to be morally superior. In that period he was in debate with representatives of an old guard.

The debate with Jung about the libido theory and the status of infantile Oedipal relationships resulted finally in the major rejoinder *Totem and Taboo* which simultaneously also contained a qualification with regard to other followers who were not as exact as he when applying psychoanalytic concepts. He placed the repression of the primal deed and thus also repression as such in opposition to Jung's belief in the developing primal libido. The sense of guilt here is the crucial link between the cultural institutions (laws, taboos) and the Oedipal primal history in an amoral childhood. In fact, here again Freud indicated that the question of where the sense of guilt comes from was crucial to psychoanalysis because it was the key to understanding the earliest psychic mechanisms.

In Freud's debate with Rank he defended his views on the sense of guilt, anxiety and the Oedipus complex from Rank who had declared that the search for an explanation of the sense of guilt was the core problem and then traced that sense of guilt back to a birth trauma. To Rank, the sense of guilt is a processing of an earlier fear. This was not acceptable to Freud because this theory seriously relativized the meaning of the Oedipus complex and the identification with the father.

Finally there was the debate with Jones and Klein, *inter alia*. A new generation of followers, inspired by Freud himself, began to investigate the *terra incognita* of pre-Oedipal development. The attention paid by Klein to pre-Oedipal hatred of the mother and the resultant sense of guilt is actually a continuation of the thinking about the death drive. The analyses of young children was a consequence of Freud's attention to the earliest years of childhood and the attention to the development of young girls was initially an extension of Freud's ideas about the developments of young boys. The findings of the London school, however, quickly led to criticism of central Freudian mechanisms. The sense of guilt and conscience formation were detached from the Oedipus complex and were designated preliminary stages in pre-Oedipal developments. The role of the father and the significance of identification were (once again) relativized. Again, Freud was defending his central concepts and complexes. The sense of guilt continued to be linked to the Oedipus complex; via the sense of guilt, the meaning of this complex had been discovered and every relativization of the relationship between the sense of guilt and the Oedipus complex constituted a threat to the central theories about, for example, repression, conscience formation, identification and even the Oedipus complex itself.

Freud not only debated with others, he also incorporated the thinking of others that could strengthen his position. When we examine the most important secondary literature upon which he depended, a number of things are worthy of note. The first of these is that Freud regularly referred to, relied on or appeared to be influenced by a number of philosophers. He particularly emphasized the fact that Schopenhauer and Nietzsche regarded a person as a being in conflict between drives and morality and how they both, in a pre-psychoanalytical era, came to psychoanalytical insights about repression, conscience, sexuality and cultural morality. He thus referred to them in order to support his own core ideas. The second item of note is partly related to the above and that is the interest in literature in the field of cultural morality. There is a whole range of authors who can be related to this theme, from Ehrenfels to Breasted, from Baldwin to Reik, from Atkinson to Trotter. What all these writers have in common is that they analysed important moments in history or human relationships with, *inter alia*, the aim to provide insight into moral mechanisms and developments. This literature is typical of Freud's constant interest in cultural morality in relation to individual conscience and the repression of drives. The third item of note is his extensive citation of favourite authors and references to tragedies. Goethe needs to be mentioned here, but also of course Sophocles, Shakespeare and Dostoyevsky. With these authors, too, what is noticeable is that Freud presented them as writers who had fathomed the deeper conflicts of the soul. Within this framework they had the same authority as the previously mentioned scientific authors and that is remarkable, if only because he regarded psychoanalysis as a science and defended it as such. Given that much of the literature to which Freud referred is related to the analysis of

psychic conflicts in relation to cultural morality, it is hardly surprising that this literature can usually also be linked to the theme of the sense of guilt.

With his attention to the sense of guilt, Freud undoubtedly thematized an important element from Judeo-Christian religious history. He had an eye for the defining moments and periods in Judeo-Christian religion and the significance of the sense of guilt in them. It is possible to dispute how he did this, but the fact remains that in his day he realised and experienced that the sense of guilt was an essential element of religion and that this sense of guilt influenced the general malaise he recognized in his own time. That he regarded religion mainly as a system of dogmas and carefully recorded rituals appears to us nowadays to be a serious oversimplification. That limited vision is the result of the fact that Freud assumed obsessional neurosis to be the basic model and of positivistic approaches to explain phenomena by determining their origins. Seen from that perspective, religion is about repressive morality (dogma) on the one hand and repressed drives on the other. At the same time, Freud's limited view of religion must be nuanced and placed in context. First, his view of religion was part of the scientific culture of his time wherein reductionist approaches went hand in hand with systems that explained everything. Jung and Wundt also reduced religion to clearly defined mechanisms and even explained it based on a single principle. What is also important is that Freud's vision of religion was fed by a specific theological tradition that reached him via Reik and Pfister. The criticism of dogmas and the attention to the historical core of religion behind them can also be found in modern theology. Bearing in mind Freud's positivism and reductionism, the actual core of his analyses of the sense of guilt in religion and culture should not be overlooked – the analytic discovery that the sense of guilt is not just an individual symptom, but part of cultural and religious heritages, traditions in which human psychic conflicts are processed and expressed in various ways depending on different cultural and religious structures.

The fact that Freud's thoughts on religion are anchored in his time does not necessarily mean that they are passé, but rather that they give us the opportunity to gain insight not only into the Jewish but also the Christian beliefs of his time. With regard to Judaism, I have drawn parallels with, for example, Schönberg, his reactions to anti-Semitism and his reflections on Jewish identity. Freud's approach to religion also provides us with insight into the problem of Jewish identity, a problem with which so many central European Jews struggled. With regard to Christianity, in *The Future of an Illusion* Freud exposed questions that were current in the theology of the time. What is the meaning of this dogma? What is the value of the historical core of a religion? Not only Freud, but also the theologians of his time questioned the nature of religion and the value of everything that appeared to obscure its essence or historical core. It is precisely the fact that Freud's work on religion is dated that can provide insight into the discussions and crises of

the theology of that time. A proper determination of the influence (via Reik and Pfister in particular) of modern theology and the rising science of religion and psychology of religion on Freud's analyses of religion needs closer examination.

The fact that Freud's work on religion is dated does not mean it is not suitable for a re-evaluation. If we take the time to look further than Freud's analogy between obsessional neurosis and religion, or his reductionism, a rich field of research emerges: the various ways the sense of guilt in different religious traditions is processed and expressed. Freud himself referred to this in *The Interpretation of Dreams* when he compared Oedipus to Hamlet, in *Totem and Taboo* when he stated that religions do not evolve in a linear way but that there are periods of development, decline and restoration, and in *Moses and Monotheism* where the sense of guilt is a determinative factor in historical developments and shifts, in the formation of tradition and of what could be called a group mentality.

Finally, there is also the importance of Freud's debates for our own time. After all, it was during the debates between Freud and his followers that positions were adopted that are still recognizable today. A good understanding of those debates provides insight into current discussions or the lack of them. Within this framework it was interesting to chart the debate between Freud and the London school in more detail and present the themes of that debate. There is more to this than just the question of whether the relationship of the child to its mother or father was more influential for its development. There is more to this than just the question of whether pre-Oedipal developments are more significant than Oedipal, or vice versa. There is for example the question of how the supposed amorality of a child can be contained by a growing or sudden realization of good and evil. Freud's vision that a frustrating parent must be assumed as an external influence for the emergence of a sense of guilt undoubtedly opens up new avenues of discussion about the old question of the status of what actually happens during childhood. On the other hand, for example, Jones's idea of a prenefarious sense of guilt is also problematic; for him, after all, this meant an intuition of good and evil before we can speak of a comprehension of good and evil. Klein's thoughts on splitting and the creation of morality also deserve clarification. Can we derive comprehension of good and evil from aggression against and fear of a threatening object? Given that aggression for Klein was a working out of Freud's speculative death drive makes this question even more problematic.

Hence, despite the centrality of the issue of the sense of guilt in Freud's thought and, in the debates with his followers, despite the importance of these discussions for current debates between various psychoanalytic schools, and despite the fact that the sense of guilt is the central issue in Freud's studies on culture and religion, studies on Freud's thought on the issue are rare. My reconstruction of Freud's theories on the sense of guilt fills this lacuna.

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